"I cannot forget the treatment that I received in the detention centre":

Unpacking the stories and experiences of refugees and migrants in Estonia in the context of Europe's refugee "crisis"

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The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Portsmouth.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY AND LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

I confirm that this thesis and the five published articles it refers to are the results of my original work and research, carried out during my PhD studies at the University of Tallinn and the University of Portsmouth. I confirm that this work has not been considered for any other academic award.

List of publications

Islam, A. (2016) Refugee Quota: is Estonia Ready to Receive Refugees? A Review of the Literature on Migration and Ethnic Minorities in Estonia**.** *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*. 5 (3), 281-297.

Islam, A. (2017) Constructing Narratives through Storytelling: A Study of Refugees in Estonia. *Anthropological Notebook* 23(2), 67-81.

Islam, A. (2016) A study of South Asian Refugee's Settlement Experiences in Estonia, *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.* 19 (2), 86-101.

Islam, A. (2017) Identity Practice: A study of Bangladeshi Immigrants Leisure Subculture and Identity practices In Tallinn, Estonia. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21 (2), 5-17.

Islam, A. (2020) Untold stories**:** A study of Sudanese and Syrian refugees in Estonia. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Science Studies*. 9 (1), 1-25.

ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis is a cumulation of five published articles, which examine different aspects of the life stories and genuine settlement attempts of refugee and migrant populations during Europe's recent refugee crisis. Specifically, the objective of the thesis has been to offer an empirically rich account of the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia during the crisis. Everyday assumptions of these populations have been the product of either political elite or national(istic) media discourses, both of which are usually limited in scope and largely antagonistic in tone. To challenge the resulting portrait of refugees and migrants as a burden and a threat to host societies across Europe, a series of qualitative and in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations were carried out with non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants between 2015 and 2017.

The ensuing series of articles illustrate well 1) the peculiarity of refugee and migrant politics towards non-European populations in Estonia; 2) the role of memories and stories of the homeland in refugees' "integration" attempts; 3) the representation of their agency; 4) the leisurely and ensuing identity practices of migrants and refugees; and 5) the meeting of past and present in how stories underpin the future plans of migrants and refugees in Estonia. The importance of individuality for each and every participant who participated in the study and the diversity and heterogeneity of refugee and migrant populations emerge strongly from the qualitative evidence. In this way, this PhD thesis challenges the homogenous assumptions of refugee and migrant populations and raises important theoretical, conceptual and policy questions about who *should* produce refugee and migration narratives and how these narratives *should be* deconstructed. In response, some thoughts are offered about the potential benefits of focusing on 'marginalised voices' and adopting a decolonial framework to (future) studies on refugee and migration (politics) in Europe.

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2015, the centre for asylum seekers and refugees in Vao village, Estonia, was set on fire. There were over 50 people in that building at the time, including 13 children. Although no casualties or serious injuries occurred, largely due to the quick response of firefighters, this 'incident' was a blunt attempt at mass murder. The Prime Minister, Taavi Roivas, labelled the events of the night as the doing of an "evil" person and portrayed it as an *exceptional* event. In a similar vein, the Etonian president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, called for a united front against racism directed at asylum seekers and refugees among the political parties (Postimees, 2015). This event served as the ultimate backdrop and starting point for my PhD thesis outlined in this document and the five articles which underpin my thesis. A couple of urgent issues – all interrelated – arose from that night, which propelled my approach to research, and none of which is particularly exclusive to the case of Estonia.

First, the response of the political elite to the crisis could largely be characterised as limited and impartial. In relation to that night in 2015, for instance, neither the Estonian president nor the prime minister made an attempt to *genuinely* address the underlying reasons which could explain how and why Estonia arrived at a juncture at which hatred paved the way towards 'evil actions' against a select group of its population. This may explain why statements fuelling anti-refugee sentiments could still be made by leading politicians in 2020 – five years after the events in Vao. For instance, the leader of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) and minister of interior, Mart Helme, called for the 'pushing back of refugees because they have different genes' (Err, 2020). He pledged that as long as his party governed the country, 'Estonia [would] not accept even a single asylum seeker' (Err, 2019).

Similarly shallow and hostile elite responses to the refugee crisis emerged – and continue to be present – elsewhere in Europe too. Indeed, many European leaders even utilised

the crisis to bolster their electoral support and did so rather successfully. The prime minister of Hungary, Victor Orban, for example, has pledged and begun to build a fence in order to 'defend [Europe's] Christian civilisation' from Muslim refugees (Kelemen, 2015). In Germany, new far-right parties, including the Alternative for Germany (AFD) Party, garnered never-before-seen levels of popularity on the back of their anti-refugee and anti-Islamic stance, receiving 13% of the vote in the 2017 general election (Otto and Steinhardt, 2017). In France, Slovakia and Poland extreme right parties begun to gain a centre political stage – and did so by, in their own claim, 'speaking on behalf of' the majority (Randall and Shalini, 2016). Even an EU-coordinated programme, the Schengen system, which guarantees peoples' free movement in practice, came under severe pressure as individual countries started to re-introduce border controls for the very first time – and only ever doing the same in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Balabanova and Balch, 2020). These examples underscore that intra-EU elite divisions on the refugee crisis emerged not only between Eastern and Western states, as it has been the case with other European Union (EU) and European political issues of late, but also between some of the founding members (Otto and Steinhardt, 2017). At the same time, divisions emerged at the highest levels of EU policymaking with hostility characterising much of the EU Council's proceedings at the height of the crisis, including meetings which were originally set to determine the distribution of refugee settlements across member states (Kelemen, 2015). This largely emerged along ideological divisions, especially social democrats and liberals on the one hand, and right-wing and populist leaders on the other (Heaven and Dimitris, 2018). While much has been written about how Europe's refugee crisis affected European Union politics and public attitudes towards migration (see for instance Randall and Shalini, 2016, Sigona, 2018, Talay and Coninck, 2020), the case of Estonia remains an understudied example. This PhD seeks to complement the extensive literature by zooming in on the understudied Estonian case.

Second, antagonistic and unwelcome public attitudes towards refugees and migrants did not 'only' manifested in violence but was especially notable discursively – and once again across Europe (Barlai et al., 2020). In the case of Estonia, there is a general belief among the public that only victims of war should be accepted into the country (Yatsyk, 2018). Although Syrian refugees came arrived to the country in large numbers in the course of 2015, other nationalities, including Bangladeshi and Sudanese asylum seekers were also part of the EU's 'resettlement' scheme. There was nonetheless considerable negativity public attitudes towards refugees on the whole – reflected upon as a *single* group within the Estonian population. According to a public survey from Autumn 2015, 29% Estonian thought that their country should not participate in the EU's refugee quota framework with 42% believing that participation in the scheme can (and perhaps should) be different than giving shelter to refugees (ViruProspect, 2015). A year later, in 2016, 21% of the population found refugees "problematic" for the Estonian society (Postimees, 2016). Another survey showed that over 90% of the population supported refugees accepting and adopting Estonian language, values and culture and giving up their own languages, values and cultures (Voog, 2016). In the European context, Estonia has been ranked 22 out of 23 countries ready to receive refugees from outside of Europe (Masso, 2009) and 27 out of 28 EU countries for negative attitudes towards refugees (Eurobarometer report, 2018).

These results strongly suggest that in Estonia today, processes of exclusion are aimed at non-European refugees. Siklodi (2020, 91-118) has illustrated how such bottom-up categorisation and separation of "us" (full members of a political community) and the "other" (the non-members) can, in the longer term, fuel processes of differentiation within political communities. While the voice of the *other* is often accepted to be overlooked and underrepresented in "local" politics too start with, it might remain overlooked and underrepresented even after the *other* becomes a 'formal' member of the community. The latter

is often apparent in the ongoing differentiation between active (original members) /passive (new members with migrant background for instance) of a political community. While Siklodi only really examined these processes with regards to different groups of EU mobile/immobile citizens, similar themes have been explored in the (post)colonial literature, with regards to the voices and non-representation of non-European, non-white, non-Western, and so on voices, cultures and worldviews (Spivak, 1996; Bhambra, 2014; Quijano, 2007). In the case of the refugee crisis as addressed in this PhD (but also beyond its remits) becomes how can the non-European *other*, in this instance refugees, share their views, stories and experiences in their European country of residence?

Third and relatedly, there has been little to no attention paid to representing the voices of asylum seekers and refugees – the clear target of hostile elite policies, antagonistic public discourses and countless 'evil actions' – *during* the crisis. Even the United Nation's (UN) investigative report determined that '*only'* the concerns of European residents and political leaders were apparent at the hight of Europe's refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2015). At most, asylum seekers were represented as 'victims' of unsafe and illegal sea-crossings (Parker, 2018) or as a 'threat' to the socio-economic and cultural traditions of the EU's member states and their populations (Sigona, 2018). Estonia is no exception. When non-European migrants and refugees finally begun arriving in the country in slightly higher volume during 2014 and 2015, they were portrayed derogatively and as 'mere' victims of unfortune (Yatsyk, 2018).

But who decides and who *should* decide upon the portrayal of asylum seekers using often graphic and derogatory images (Carlson et al., 2019)? At what point do portrayals come and *should* come from asylum seekers themselves (Talay and Coninck, 2020)? How are and how *should* the subsequent narratives of the everyday lives of refugees – asylum seekers who are granted settlement status – be constructed? And, importantly, to what extent are 'we' – the

European citizenry – "ready" to listen to their voices, stories and memories (Selm, 2020)? These questions, often overlooked, require urgent critical (self-) reflection because they can help us to build a better understanding of the asylum experience, of the lives of refugees and migrants and of their longer-term attempts at integration in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, the key objective of this PhD has been to offer critical and in-depth empirical evidence of the experiences of non-European groups of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in the context of the refugee crisis. The data collected for this PhD is empirically rich and can contribute to future and more critical discussions about the aforementioned series of questions.

In offering critical and in-depth empirical evidence, via interviews and ethnographic observations, my PhD aspired to "tell the story" of Europe's refugee crisis from the viewpoint of often 'marginalised' voices (Rutazibwa, 2016). Their resulting "story" consists of five articles, which are organised in this commentary according to their theme. The first article addressed the existing literature on migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia, serving as a firm basis of the thesis and already challenging Estonia's "readiness" for the EU's quota system. The second focused on the experiences of South Asian refugees in Estonia and their subsequent settlement procedure by examining the agency representation of these groups. The third article investigated refugees in Estonia and their present and past memories and stories, linking these issues with the coping mechanisms of refugees. The fourth addressed Bangladeshi immigrants' leisure subculture practices in Tallinn. By zooming in on their game gatherings, it explored how an 'other' group which already has some sort of 'legal' presence in the country practiced their identity. The fifth article investigated the untold stories of refugees from Sudan and Syria, using a narrative approach. Together, my articles and my PhD underscore the often-challenging narratives and life stories of 'marginalised' voices which can emerge from such in-depth empirical interrogation.

Upon some further critical reflection, especially in the course of writing this commentary, the main findings of the PhD also offer some timely empirical insights into current processes of community building in Europe (Siklodi, 2020) and especially of how the *coloniality of power* – whereby only those in power are heard (Quijano, 2000) – has played out in the course of the European refugee crisis. While asylums and refugees have been portrayed as being mere victims and a burden by most of the mainstream discourses, their stories and experiences show clearly that they are not only a *single* group of people, called *'refugees',* but also different individuals in their own right. The importance of individuality for each and every participant who took part in my interviews and ethnographic observations, and the diversity and heterogeneity of their world views and future aspirations emerge strongly from this thesis.

This commentary is organised into four main parts so as to reflect upon how I approached completing my PhD. The first part provides information about my research methods. The second offers an overview of my five published articles. The third dells into the (de)colonial literature and provides some critical reflection of my key findings. The final, concluding part considers the achievements and shortfalls of the PhD thesis and identifies potential future avenues for future research and follow up studies.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

My PhD thesis emerged from a firmly empirical aspiration to offer a platform where the experiences, narratives and life stories of different groups of migrants who arrived at Estonia recently could be shared. In broad terms, my research probed what the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia have been at the height of the refugee crisis (Research question (RQ) 1). In unpacking these experiences, my project questioned how ready Estonia has been to accommodate non-European arrivals (RQ2). Subsequently, it examined the multifaceted experiences of various groups of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants by questioning what the key characteristics of their memory (RQ3), their agency of representation (RQ4) and identity practices (RQ5) and broader integration attempts and life stories (RQ6) have been. This commentary seeks to provide an overall answer to RQ1, whereas each of my individual articles address RQs 2-6. The main objective of my research was to offer an empirically rich account of the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Given the complex nature and wide-array of topical issues I was interested in, I adopted a flexible approach to research which enabled the adding together of a series of distinctive qualitative methods (DeWalt, 2011). My methodological framework emerged from the literature on oral narratives and life stories, particularly those completed by Bertaux (1991), Yow (1994) and Tonkin (1992). Their reflection on how the telling of stories offer a unique setting to explore the genuine experiences and daily lives of people who are or have had traumatic encounters was particularly inspiring and relevant for my own work. I learnt that it was important to focus on people's previous histories and current life testimonies when attempting to unpack their displacement experiences (Bertaux, 1991). Besides guiding the broader methods framework of my PhD, these studies provided some useful tips on how to collect and analyse testimonial narratives, including the type of interviews and observation

methods I adopted (Tonkin, 1992). Building on these recommendations, this PhD used a multiple interview approach with open-ended questions and ethnographic observations in order to provide participants plenty of opportunities to openly narrate and "exhibit" their experiences, memories, identities and various stages of their everyday lives (Yow, 1994).

Open-ended interviewing is a technique often relied upon by researchers on refugee lives and identity and (non-)citizenship practices (Yow, 1994; Edensor, 2002; Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000). Following in the footsteps of previous studies on everyday practices (Kubik, 2009; Endersor, 2002) and in order to complement the interview data and more genuinely reflect upon the sensitive qualitative information my participants offered to me, ethnographic observation was also carried out with some of them. Since such an ethnographic method has tended to focus on an entire cultural group or community, small or large, who interact with each other quite often, my focus was the leisurely sub-culture of my participants. By adopting a flexible methodological approach and mixing interview and ethnographic methods, the PhD pursued a further ambition; to explore and generate some in-depth knowledge that is normally invisible in the broader socio-cultural context (Schwarts and Yanow, 2012).

In order to generate such an 'invisible' evidence as researchers, an in-depth understanding of not only the group of people being studied but also the broader context within which the research is being carried out is required (Drake, 2008). Coming from an immigrant background allowed me to adopt such a familiar position to my PhD project from the outset. Following Kachen and Chaitin (2006), I recognised that having a shared immigration experience with my participants granted me an "insider" position within the project. In particular, it offered me a similar opportunity to Richies (1995), who drew on her own experiences with racism and sexism as an African-American woman when establishing rapport with her African-American female respondents. Indeed, being an insider equipped me with

awareness and recognition of the divisive content and the sensitive dimensions of the topics my participants brought up during the fieldwork (Berger, 2013). However, being an insider also affected the way in which participants offered information, potentially blurring the identity designation and the objectivity of the researcher (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Villenas, 2000; Chaudhry, 2000). I had plenty of such instances. For example, participants may leave sentences unfinished during interviews, assuming that I would know the rest of the story anyway. Taking the insider position has the very genuine risk of blurring the boundaries between the researcher and the researched, whereby the researcher's beliefs, values, and perception can be invoked by the participants as part of their own stories (Drake, 2010). I was particularly aware of these issues and made every effort to allow respondents to complete their sentences, raise new issues and ask me questions at the end of the interviews and ethnographic observations.

By comparison, for a researcher coming from "outside" of such a community, addressing a sensitive topic more objectively and maintaining the role of the researcher and the researched might come easier. However, it would be challenging to build a comprehensive understanding of the culture of such hard-to-reach communities, like asylum seekers and refugees as an "outsider" (Berger, 2013). Their study may result in a superficial investigation due to their unfamiliarity with the socio-cultural context (Allaste, 2006). Recognising the importance of "remaining a stranger" to my participants (Simmel, 2002) I made deliberate efforts to maintaining the separation between my experiences and theirs and followed Padgett's (2008) advice to hear what is said rather than assume what is being talked about. There are also further, practical, advantages of studying the familiar in a PhD project such as this one. It allows the researcher to keep trace of and develop a genuine understanding of the reactions of participants in more depth (Padgett, 2008). Achieving a level of trust, degree of comfort and building rapport with my participants (Berger, 2013) were therefore key building blocks of

participants' sharing of their experiences in a cooperative manner and they even facilitated the recruiting of further participants.

The empirical evidence used for my five articles were collected in three different periods. The first part of the fieldwork lasted from March to May 2015 and mostly occurred at government-offered asylum and refugees hosting locations, including the Vao centre as well as in a couple of houses in Tartu and Tallinn. The second part started in December 2016 and was completed in January 2017 at the Vao centre – the central housing centre for refugees in Estonia. The Estonian Police and Boarder Guard gave me official permission to carry out the fieldwork, and positive rapport was established with the manager of the centre in the lead up to and during the study. The third part of the fieldwork was carried out from April to May 2017, and an open field was selected for this fieldwork, where Bangladeshi immigrants tend to gather to play cricket and socialise.

Since most of the empirical evidence comes from the fieldwork that took place at the Vao centre, the location demands a little more attention. For families or individuals who seek asylum for protection, the Estonian state provides a housing centre, which is located in a village called Vao, in the Laane-Viru county. It takes around one and half hour by train to get to that village from the capital city of Tallinn, and this is the only convenient way to reach the capital. The village has a small shop, selling basic groceries, which is why the residents from the Vao centre usually go to the nearby town Vaike Maarja, which is 15 minutes away by bus. There are two buses per day that go to and from the town to the village. Longer time was spent on the interviews which were collected at the Vao centre with further opportunities to spend more time with my participants, observe their daily practices in their residence, and in their home belongings.

My interviewees are the asylum seekers, refugees and migrants living in Estonia. Three different period was set to carry out interviews with 62 respondents in total. The resulting data has been broken into four different datasets (Appendix 1). Respondents, who had refugee status, were living in Estonia for at least over a year before taking part in my research. Asylum seekers were living in the course for at least six months to a year, and immigrants were living there for between one to over ten years. Respondents age distribution varied between 9 to 57 years and, in terms of their gender distribution, 19 respondents were female and the rest were male. While it is important to note such background information, these did not serve as an analytical unit for my analysis. The main intention of my research was to listen to the stories and experiences of all and every member of refugee and migrant groups in order to raise their voice. On average, each interview lasted about 15 to 20 minutes but quite a few interviews went much longer than this as interviewees usually talked about their experiences and expressed their stories in a more conservatory manner. Observation notes were taken during the nights after each interview.

The data analysis was comprised of the following stages: to check their accuracy, the interviews were transcribed. Interview and observation notes were then read and re-read to gain familiarity with the gathered data. The resulting transcriptions were analysed with the help of thematic and narrative analysis. They were then initially coded and these initial codes were then checked for further themes and then were reviewed again. At the final stage, more specific definitions and themes were used to "categorise" the main issues my participants had talked about. This process was crucial also in that it allowed me to combine these themes with the topics from my literature review. As Vaismoradi (2013) stated, it is important to "break" long interview transcripts into relative units of content and to submit them to descriptive treatment. The whole data analysis process was carried out manually.

Key themes included ‘homeland as idyllic stories’, ‘diversity of experiences’, ‘healing through leisure activities’ and ‘making lives through story telling’. As mentioned before, these themes were identified through a repeated process of reading and re-reading the transcripts, and they emerged spontaneously from the data. As this study mostly focused on materials from life stories, qualitative analysis assisted in building the philosophical background of interpretation (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Qualitative data analysis has been already found to be well suited to analyse sensitive phenomena such as how refugees spend their time once they arrive in a new country and what are their experiences of transitions are like (for example, Elo and Kyngas, 2008).

The key aspects of research ethics from voluntary participation, to anonymity and confidentiality, admissibility or the question of observation were followed in the preparation of and conduction of the fieldwork (Flick, Kardoff and Stenike, 2004). Following to the ethical guidelines by the University of Tallinn, therefore, the respondents’ confidentiality and anonymity has been strictly maintained, and all the participants were given information about the objectives of the PhD prior to the fieldwork, were asked for their verbal consent of participation and were offered a withdrawal window of two weeks after the interviews took place (see Appendix 2 for example of consent taken). Formal consent was also taken from the manager of the Vao centre in order to visit and conduct research there. Additionally, during the fieldwork, the manager of the Vao centre asked me not to take any photos, as it would go against refugee protection and identity questions. I followed all the instructions given by the centre’s manager and the Police and Border Guard of Estonia. As a result, all participants contributed to this research with enthusiasm throughout and after the fieldwork, with none requesting a withdrawal.

PRESENTATION OF ARTICLES THROUGH KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

Having introduced the rationale for this PhD thesis and its methodological framework and adopted methods, this section turns to the presentation of the five published articles by recounting their key findings. These findings offer distinctive interpretation of the phenomena of asylum, refugee and migrant experiences, lives, memories and identities in Estonia – with valuable insights for not only the achievements of the study vis-à-vis its key objectives, but also for future research.

Article 1: Non-EU refugees and /in Estonia: Unprepared and underrepresented

This article was written with an aim to explore the key patterns of migration studies in Estonia (RQ2). The latter has been mostly built around four major dimensions. The first dimension, emigration from and return migration to Estonia, focuses on the different waves of western-orientated Estonian migration during the mid-nineteenth century and Second World War and the pattern of return migration to Estonia after the Second World War and after the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) (Kulu and Tammaru, 2000). The second dimension, immigrant population in Estonia, studies first and second-generation immigrants and has mostly dealt with Russian, German or Swedish populations during or after their Estonia occupation (e.g. 1950-1990) (Kulu and Tammaru, 2000). This dimension clearly underscores that the country has been occupied by external forces for long periods of time. The third dimension, the characteristics and structure of ethnic minorities, zooms in on Russian speaking ethnic minorities, who never returned back to Russia after the collapse of the SU. This group makes up roughly 30 per cent of Estonia's population today and most research on them deals with their number and citizenship status (Schulze, 2014). The fourth dimension, the integration aspect of ethnic minorities in different sectors, has, once again mostly examined the practices and

experiences of Russian speaking ethnic minorities (and at times Ukrainian and Finish minorities), including their 'willingness' to learn the Estonian language, have 'local' Estonian partners, as well as their geographical dispersion (Nimmerfeldt, Shulze and Taru, 2011).

A critical overview of these dimensions clearly underlines that there has been little to no attention paid to non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia. Yet, in response to the European refugee crisis Estonian swiftly agreed to the EU's quota numbers on refugees (Postimess, 2015). However, without any reflection on non-European minorities in the main literature and existing policies on Estonian immigration, the article posed the question: To what extent is Estonia ready to receive the allocated share of refugees? Therefore, the first article laid the foundations for empirically studying how non-European refugee populations live their everyday life in Estonia (and not only in the context of the refuges crisis) and how *they* wish to share their own stories and memories. The rest of the articles addressed these issues in turn.

Article 2: Listening memories and stories

This paper analysed the present and past memories and stories of non-European refugees, who were placed in the Estonian Refugee centre during the period of 2015-2017 (RQ3). While expressing their memories, respondents portrayed the image of *their* homeland as a place of joy and peace. This was the case despite of them being forcibly displaced from their country. According to a participant from Iraq (1); *'[w]hen my country was stable, and everything was running smoothly. It was very nice and lovely. Weather is nice and you can spend time on the street. You can find nice and fresh food on the street'*. Memories of past were thus likely to be idealised by participants, which then also provided a source of a hope that the difficult period will come to an end and they can lead a happy life again. As a participant from

Palestine (2) had put it; *'I am alive and getting support from Estonian government. I will go to language school and then get a good job here'* .

The sense of 'moving forward' became key to refugees' everyday stories, despite the hardships they have experienced. However, it was observed that hanging on glorified memories of *their* homeland can be an obstacle to developing coping mechanisms in a new society. While telling stories about what it was like to live in the detention centre when he first arrived in Estonia, a participant stressed; *'I cannot forget the treatment that I received in the detention centre. I do not think even in my country in a normal situation people will be treated as badly'* (participant from Iraq 3). These issues bring to the fore some important questions about how glorified memories of home might restrict refugees' attempts to respond to feeling marginalised and, in the longer term, possibly to adapt faster to their new lives in a new country. This then compels us to ask whether refugees can and do to not only practice their agency individually but for this agency to be represented just as it is the case with the other members of the host society. These questions laid the foundation for my third article.

Article 3: Representation of agency

This article addressed South Asian refugees' agency (free choice and capacity to act individually) representation in Etonia (i.e. within a given structure, in this case the refugee camps and Estonian asylum-related rules). Across the main European public news media platforms, refugee issues were the key issues dominating headlines at the hight of the refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2015). Refugee issues were also integral to much of the antagonistic, right-wing and often populist political discourses (Lafaut and Coene, 2019). Important questions have already been raised about the extent to which the voices of refugees have been represented in any of these emerging discourses (Arlt, 2019). Hostile media representation has often led to misconceptions about refugees in host societies (Samantha, 2016). Refugee camps were often

depicted as objects, where refugees are seen as subjects and are reduced to a form of 'bare life' (Lafaut and Coene, 2019). Due to the usual misrepresentation by the popular media and political discourses about refugees as mere victims, who do not have the ability to help themselves, they are consequently portrayed as a 'burden' (Hoewe and Huffman, 2018). Considering this theoretical ground, my third article addressed how the 'agency of representation' has or should have played out according to South Asian refugees in Estonia (RQ4).

Participants in this study had different individual preferences about how they (or more broadly refugees) should be depicted in mainstream discourses and *their* preferences often varied even among single families. Religion and religious signifiers were often evoked by participants when discussing issues of representation. In this vein, one participant said that she *'feel[s] "comfortable" with wearing the hijab outside. This is the way I am used to [going out]' (participant from Pakistan 4). A*nother member of the same family stated, by comparison, '*I would like to learn local language. I want to go to swimming lessons with my friends and many different trainings to get a good job instead of focusing on religion' (participant from Pakistan 2). There is thus likely to be much* heterogeneity of preference within a single family about their lives in the host society. It clearly differs from popular media and political (and at times academic) discourses, which tend to bring all refugees, all religious backgrounds etc under a single label.

The article thus underscored that whatever structure refugees carry with them from their country of origin and regardless of the structure they are in at the host society, they do practice their *own* agency – however overlooked this maybe in mainstream discourses. Many participants preserve their home culture by wearing traditional dresses. *'I am wearing a three-piece shalwar, Kameez and Orna, I feel comfortable with it, but others do not. I got used to Estonian cloths and I feel rather comfortable with it'* (participant from Bangladesh 1). This

clearly underlines that overly vague and broad media discourses and political notions of refugee lives which often frame current policies are simply not equipped to reflect upon the real lives, anticipations and struggles of people labelled as 'refugees'. This finding raises the question about whether or not similar labelling processes occur with relation to other migrant groups – and so other segments of the population. Building on this question, my subsequent research turned to analysing how immigrants 'practice' their identity in Estonia – and beyond the context of the refugee crisis.

Article 4: Identity practice

Just by labelling refugees and migrants as such, these labels become an important part of their social identity (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). Much of the mainstream discourses coverage about them is then concerned with how much these groups affect a country's socioeconomic situation (Talay and Conink, 2020). This paper addresses how immigrants practiced *their* own social identity in the course of their leisure subculture (RQ5). A cricket ground in Tallinn was selected as the point of 'leisure subculture', where participants used to meet during the weekend not only to play cricket but also to share their thoughts about their new life and everyday activities with one another.

It was evident that leisure subculture, in the form of sports gathering provided participants a chance to get out of their everyday stressful life. *'It gives me a sense of togetherness, which gives me strength to move forward'* (participant from Bangladesh 8). Popular political discourse gives us the sense that the separation of immigrant's leisure space from the mass population leads to cultural and social isolation and to a limited depth of knowledge about the host society (Simich, 2014). My study by comparison illustrated that the leisure subculture within Bangladeshi immigrant community helped respondents' mental health and contributed to their

general wellbeing. This is important, as suggested by Portes (2007), after all, we should not always focus on what makes people feel sick or, in the context of my overall study, excluded but to consider also what makes them healthy, content *and* included. Another significant issue which emerged through this ethnographic observation was that participants not only practice *their* collective identity through social gatherings but their individual identity. The latter was apparent in the way in which individual statuses in Estonia was introduced.

> *I am just an immigrant for this society's people. It does not matter who I am or what I do. This kind of social gathering provided me my own status and identity. When group members came to know that I am doing PhD, they started to see me differently and we always discuss some nice and intellectual topic* (participant from Bangladesh 14).

This suggests that the mainstream narrative with overly negative, victimhood or burdened connotation which then places diverse group of migrants as *similar* and as a *threat* (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018) is recognised by migrants. Even more, migrants may wish to 'get away from' such homogenous identity signifiers and to deconstruct such narratives, asking for *their* voice to be heard on a larger scale.

Article 5: Expressing stories

My final article addressed how the sharing of personal stories and memories assist in migrants' attempts to adapt to life in a new society (RQ6). It studied in-depth two groups of participants from two different countries in order to explore their coping resources, including their present and past experiences with their new life in Estonia. As mentioned before, it is often expected by the host society that refugees should forget their past memories (Schuback, 2017) so that they can move forward and integrate in their new surroundings. Participants in this study

expressed their *struggle* related memories, as well as *moving forward* related stories. While expressing *struggle* related memories of past, they spoke about their experiences of conflict and war, and how they managed to escape from such dire situation. However, their present, moving forward stories came immediately as a source of healing with the recognition that, generally, they are now in a much more stable situation. *'It was all chaos, noise and screaming but thanks God, I am now fine. I have a hope that one day I will become doctor to help people'* (Participant from Syria 5). Thus, even when the past is not glorified, the same question arises, namely, should refugees forget their past or consider their struggle related narratives as a means for moving (and looking) *forward* to the future.

Perhaps most importantly, this article underscored how little attention is paid to the stories of refugees. Many participants mentioned that my research provided them the first ever opportunity to share their experiences, '[U]*until now I did not share my stories with anybody because nobody wanted to listen me.'* (participant from Syria 1). This shows how little chance refugees tend to have to raise their voice in the context of detention centres or integration practices. Sharing experiences quickly emerged however as an important source of coping mechanism to them. *'I am feeling good after sharing my stories with you'* (participant from Sudan 1). By comparison, the occasional under- and misrepresentation of refugee experiences appeared as a strong de-motivating factor in their integration (and moving forward) attempts, *'I gave an interview with one journalist but why those stories never appeared on newspaper? What is the point of sharing my experiences?'* (Participant from Sudan 4). Hence, refugees continue to be presented with limited opportunities – if any – to genuinely raise their voice and share their memories and future aspirations.

SOME CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

In order to provide rich empirical insight into how non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia experienced the refugee crisis, my articles relied on a range of original empirical evidence and key concepts from anthropology and sociology such as agency, identity, narrative, individual stories and memories. Each article offered an answer to a distinctive research question (specifically RQ2 to RQ6). However, in order to more fully answer RQ1, namely what the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia have been at the height of the refugee crisis, some further theoretical reflection on my findings and articles is required. This was a key issue that I have aimed to at least begin addressing during my studies at the University of Portsmouth. In particular, upon beginning a journey of discovering the vast literature on coloniality and, especially, decoloniality, I begun to reflect on how my participants' experiences in Estonia have been shaped by the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano, 2007). Although largely portrayed as a singular and homogenous segment of "the burned population" of a society, my findings in my articles give us a strong sense that such remote discourses are not necessarily the reflection of the genuine memories, life stories and integration goals of various non-European refugee and migrant groups. In order to draw attention to the weaknesses and dangers of maintaining such false discourses, this section begins to reflect on how such ideas have been produced in much of Europe. The section is far from conclusive and, at this stage, is introduced in order to offer some further and critical insights on my findings discussed earlier, whilst identifying a future research trajectory.

Coloniality and studying refugee and migrant representations

Modern societies have been constructed through racialisation (Du Bois, 2015), which. according to Roos (1982), stems from racism and has led to particular and wide-spread

structures of domination and oppression (Robert and Sybol, 2003). To a large extent the current world order, much of its population and the way in which the population has been divided, are the product of such racism and racialisation (Francisco, 2014). These in turn have a legacy from colonialism (Robert and Sybol, 2003). The emergence of social categories in terms of race, religion, and ethnicity and how people are classified in the name of their administrative, legal and aesthetic categories are also the product of colonialism. Indeed, a system of power was constituted through labour, economic and governance relations together with 'historical identities'. Together, these developments make up what Anibal Quijano (2007) termed as the 'coloniality of power'. The colonial and racial differentiation at its heart, or rather, 'Euro-centrism', in many ways remains *the* fundamental basis of today's world-hierarchical system. Founded in the aforementioned 'geo-historical places' it shapes how we today see the non-European 'others' (Quijano, 2007). It is evident that many of the exclusion and differentiation processes within European societies that we now have is based on racism and have a colonial origin (e.g. Siklodi, 2020). Perhaps even more importantly, these processes are still produced and reproduced and in many ways are more stable even today than perhaps during the colonial past and during the matrix it was established (Rutazibwa, 2014). An excellent example of this effect is how migrants and refugees are viewed by the host societies or how the mainstream media, public and elite discourses justify an antagonistic tone towards them.

Indeed, today's global capitalism continues the matrix of racism and sustains the power of coloniality, which actually represents dominant culture or race over another to build racial capitalism (Maria, 2008). This is why, for many thinkers, racialisation and European colonialism shape modernity (Du Bois 2015, Eric, 1995, James, 1989, Claudia, 2011). The idea of modernity about how one truth exists and if we can identify this one truth, we can generalise it in fact gives Euro-centrism an edge and feeds into claims about it becoming superior over 'others'. Such sentiments fuel processes of differentiation within political communities;

between citizens and non-citizens or recent citizens in Europe today (making the term 'alien' and 'others' visible) (Siklodi, 2020). This system of differentiation regulates health care, media, political participation and even more, how different groups of the population is represented through media. European modernity and colonialism are then, in many ways two sides of the same coin, representing how our world order has been shaped through racism and has divided political communities, the 'us' and the 'others.' An excellent example of this is how the 2015 inflow of non-European refugee and migrants to Europe was nearly instantaneously turned into a 'crisis'. In Estonia, the number of applications for asylum status started to increase in 2010, reaching a peak of 230 in 2015. After that, the numbers begun to decrease again (ERR, 2019). Just as a comparative metric for the same period of time, Bangladesh, a small South Asian country, which was colonised by the British for over two hundred years, hosted over a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (UNHCR, 2015). Yet, we only ever labelled the European – and so Estonian – examples as the 'refugee crisis' years.

It is also important to remember that many recent, non-European migration and refugee movements are perceived as *external* to Europe's history, especially in the political and media discourses but also in some academic discussions (Arlt and Wolling, 2019, Hoewe etal, 2019). Yet, in reality, Europe's past and global history is *directly linked* to these migratory movements (James, 2002). Europe and other western counties, which are usually considered as receiving countries, already had an existing, discriminatory narrative of the non-European migrants and refugee communities. In depicting the members of these communities as 'boat people' or 'illegals', they were seen as the "burned" members of the society (McHugh-Dillon, 2015). It became particularly evident how coloniality shaped political, public and media discourses across Europe (Lind, 2018). At the height of the crisis in 2015, commentators have underlined that Europe has turned to an "autumn of racism" (Matthes and Beyer, 2017).

These discriminatory themes were part and parcels of not only broadly European but also, and especially, country-specific discourses. For instance, in a study of discursive construction of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, Lynn and Lea (2003) underscored how these are constructed from a negative starting point at all times. Indeed, in many political statements and speeches, refugees are portrayed as burden and as a threat to the cohesion of the host society (Goodman and Johnson, 2013). Samuel Parker (2016) examined the way refugees have been discursively constructed by the print media specifically. As the 'unwanted invader', asylum and refugee seekers were framed as needing to be kept away or removed from the country.

Even in countries that were perceived as 'refugee' and 'migrant friendly', such as Germany, hostile media discourses were central. They too depicted refugees as a 'burden' and as 'criminals' (Matthes and Beyer, 2017), leading to violence targeting the country's recent refugee populations (Dorothee and Caroline, 2019). In particular, the media controversy about how a North-African man raped a woman in a train station in Germany exemplified not only the 'autumn of racism' but also of winter and onward to today (Arlt and Wolling, 2019). Indeed, in its aftermath, many members of the European media openly used racist dialogue of how black men might be rapists and prey upon white women especially (see for instance BBC, 2020, The Irish Time, 2019). Such openly hostile discourses had direct influence on the introduction of new deportation laws and specific entry restrictions for North-African passport holders (Matthes and Beyer, 2017).

Similarities from both of these countries can be found in Estonia and in its mainstream media's framing of the refugee crisis. It was indeed commonplace to refer to the 'refugee crisis' as 'stressful' for the host society (ERR, 2019). Instead of considering non-European refugees and migrants as people, the term 'refugee flow' was repeatedly used by one of the most popular

print newspaper, Postimees, to describe recent developments (Postimees, 2015). It did not only give a sense of a large number of refugees pouring into the country, therefore the country needing to stop their 'flow' but that there were simply no difficulties in getting to Estonia – a country rather far up North when we look at the European map – nor any differences within the recently arriving non-European migrant and refugee populations. Estonian politicians have adopted such antagonistic tones to their stance on refugee politics rather proudly. For instance, Mart Helme, leader of the Conservative People's Party mentioned that 'I will not allow even a single refugee' (ERR, 2019) into the country. By comparison, he was later elected and *allowed* to become the country's minister of interior. In this way then, Estonia represents a 'typical' case of nationalistic European country-discourses on the refugee crisis with its media and political leaders having been held too little to no accountability for their openly racist and antagonistic tone.

Decoloniality and moving away from Western-centric knowledge

What do we have to and *should* do to testify colonialism, to deconstruct current knowledge and the ways of producing knowledge today (Bhambra, 2014)? To answer this question, I draw on the concept of decoloniality; where the story emerges from multiple perspectives and multiple people, instead of absolute truths or historical misrepresentations of the 'other'. This is also about 'simply' questioning our reality. As Rutazibwa (2016) has pointed out, the experiences and contributions of historically marginalised minorities must also be part and parcels of our understanding of our 'reality'. We must hear everyone's voices and listen to their stories. My PhD corresponds with such demands directly by offering an empirically rich account of the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia. While novel in terms of empirical contribution and also in terms of case (i.e. country) study exploration, it also complements some of the ongoing discussion in decolonisation studies

which asks for more attention to be paid to the 'other'. In so doing, this section reflectively 'situates' the conceptual contributions of my PhD and my future research within decolonisation.

Homi Bhabha (1994) in the *'The location of Culture'* pointed out that, from the perspective of the 'other' we do not only need to changing the existing narratives of our history but also to transform the sense of what it means to live. According Bhabha (1994), decoloniality is no longer just about having a parallel interpretation, but interrupting Western discourses of coloniality by invoking interrogative ideas of subaltern (i.e. starting from 'other's) narratives and the critical theoretical perspectives that they bring out are undeniable truth. These perspectives can bring out untold stories. Rather than just renaming, Bhabha (1994) urged for the re-inscribing of 'other' cultures and traditions into mainstream narratives, so as to transform those narratives from both historical and theoretical perspectives.

In order to deconstruct race-based labels and narratives, Rutazibwa (2020) has asked that anti-racist scholarly works do not only engage in academic debates but also clearly reject those perceived labels and to do so by focusing on decoloniality. To provoke and encounter mainstream, antagonistic narratives and labels, Rutazibwa (2016, 199) has focused on the need to 'put the experiences and contributions of historically marginalised minorities' first. She has also underscored that the entire decolonial fight cannot and should not be "colour-blind". In a recent study on the European refugee crisis specifically, Burell and Horschelmann (2019) has stated that a shift in racial discourses can indeed be brought about by focusing more on decoloniality in the form of storytelling (visual).

Bringing a "bit of" a reflection on issues of racism and colonial mentality is not the ultimate solution however to the deconstructing of mainstream narratives. A broader rethinking of the purpose of such narratives is needed for scholars to begin to question whether and how our current political systems have been built on racism (Rutazibwa, 2014). We must, therefore,

start our work by looking at ‘others’ lives’ in order to really bring marginalised voices to the fore (Rutazibwa, 2014). In the case of migration and mobility specifically, Siklodi (2015) has, for instance, stressed that in Europe there is an existing dichotomy of passive and active European citizens along mobiles/stayers divide and that the ‘non-citizens’ are entirely excluded from such categories. In order to bring these ‘excluded’ voices into the mainstream, a more ‘conscious pluralisation’ of authors and stories has to be the way forward (Rutazibwa, 2014, 292)

In the case of my PhD, Article 1 (RQ2) suggested that if a particular section of a community or a group of people and their voices are invisible from mainstream research, often they are being misrepresented in policies and in popular discourses (Sigona, 2018). They might even be excluded from and differentiated within the receiving community in the longer term (Siklodi, 2020). Often, the lives and situation of refugees are portrayed by elite and media discourses disjointedly, leading to potential harm by categorising them as “illegal”, “survival” or “economic” migrants, or even as “boat people” (Balabanova and Balch, 2020). After the refugee crisis, many political leaders in different EU countries used the crisis for their own political gain, continuing to misrepresent refugees as a burden to the host society and as terrorists (Talay, Conick, 2020). Such practices not only incite antagonistic attitudes and potential violence but also limit attempts to introduce or implement pro-refugee policies (Rexhepi, 2018). Such practices clearly speak to the ‘coloniality of power’ as described by Anibal Quijano (2000): A system of power has been developed whereby only the voice of those in power is heard.

From Article 2 (RQ3), it was apparent that many segment of European societies, including academics have long established that there is an expectation in mainstream discourses that refugees must forget their past, so that they can more quickly adapt to their new lives in

and to meet the expectations of the host society (Schuback, 2017). As refugees, my respondents have had to go through some traumatic experiences, which they had generously shared with me, and *they* even alluded to a sense and non-tangible requirement of forgetting their own past memories. The identity of every individual regardless of their social status is context specific (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), but only a specific segment – such as refugees - experiences traumatic situations similar to those described by my respondents (Talay and Conink, 2020).

Whether or not they should forget their memories and stories of the homeland to then integrate into the host society was central to this article. However, even the way in which this question is formulated, there is an underlying indication that refugees (including the label), their everyday lives and their stories and memories are a matter of concern for those in power. According to participant *'I have decided to find a work. I am educated. If I get proper work, I will stay here as a worker [and] not as a refugee'* (participant from Sudan). The recognition that being labelled as a 'worker' or indeed as an economic migrant is preferable to a 'refugee' raises the question, *of whether the '*coloniality of refugee thoughts', which gives *them* a label – shapes our mainstream understanding of *refugees* as mere victims.

From Article 3 (RQ4), it was evident that common, existing leading narratives do not come from the refugees themselves. Instead, the presence of the coloniality of power plays its role while representing the agency of refugees. These practices lead to a plethora of misinterpretations of refugees' agency and their lives in the popular discourses and this cycle gives political leaders the chance to utilise the notion of *other* (Mclaren and Patil, 2016) and processes of othering (Burrell and Horschelmann, 2019). As a result, refugees are always, without fail, portrayed as a segment of the population who is excluded from the society – at home and abroad.

From Article 4 (RQ5), it was noticeable that, according to common scholarly works, the separation of immigrants' leisure space from the mass population leads to cultural and social isolation and to a limited depth of knowledge about the host society (Simich, 2014). My study by comparison brought out that, through community social gathering immigrants can practice their different individual identities, which has been largely labelled as "immigrants" by the host society. This kind of community gathering brings about an important source of relief to members of immigrant communities from an otherwise stressful life. This again brings out the question of "who produces knowledge?". As Solhaug and Kristensen (2015) has pointed out, in order to contest such one-sided views, an agnostic view must be adopted to understanding political communities in Europe today, which implies the engagement of every single citizens – and in the case of my research, and non-citizens.

From Article 5 (RQ6), it was apparent that most narratives are the product of the *coloniality of power* – which is often limited, false and detached. There is thus an urgent requirement to deconstruct existing, mainstream narratives, to examine their sources and determine whether or not and how far they are corresponding with the actual refugee experiences and, especially how these feed into their life aspirations and integration outlooks – and indeed to do so not only in countries with a colonial past, as my study of refugee experiences in Estonia has illustrated.

My articles and their findings, together, offer some important information about the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia against the backdrop of the refugee crisis (RQ1). In particular, there is a strong indication from my articles that offering an opportunity to members of these groups to reflect upon their memories, identity practices help in formulating their life stories and in the longer term 'healing process' after some awful and traumatic experiences. My PhD has underscored that the experiences of non-

European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Estonia are characterised by ‘others’. These issues clearly contribute to ongoing processes of differentiation and exclusion in the context of political community building processes in Europe as defined and examined by Siklodi (2020). However, rather than focusing on members of the majority – i.e. European and EU citizens – my PhD brings in the voices of the ‘other’ and asks for their voices, the voices of those on the margins to be included in order to fully appreciate the ‘reality’ of the Estonian and, more broadly, European communities today (Rutazibwa, 2016).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My PhD thesis set out to provide an empirical platform to raise the voices of non-European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in the context of Europe's refugee crisis. Its main objective has been to provide an empirically rich account of the experiences of members of these groups in Estonia. Estonia is a small Baltic country and EU member state, which has been often overlooked in the crisis context, but which has offered a very similar antagonistic 'home' and has built hostile discourses to the receiving of non-European arrivals of late as other countries in Europe. A review of current refugee and migrant policies, discourses and academic studies in Estonia (RQ2/Article 1), underscored how little the country was prepared for accepting such refugees and migrants.

Most public, media and political discourses present refugees as excluded from the main society and segregated into enclaves of losers. Refugees are often seen as a redundant segment of the population, who live in a limbo, without access to (and, even, an interest in) basic rights. They are depicted as too remote from the societies and from 'everyday people', which then bars us from the opportunity to listen to *refugee* stories first-hand (Pia et al, 2018). Even more, refugee stories are not in demand, nor are they deemed relevant to be heard (Eastmond, 2007). In the few occasions that refugees are asked about their experiences, they are mostly misrepresented by the popular media and political discourses (Liza and Lamis, 2019). Therefore, from the outset, my PhD was seeking to make a strong case for future research to tell the genuine stories and experiences of different groups of (non-European) asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, and, importantly, to share these with the members of the host (and sending) societies and politicians in Europe and beyond.

In order to meet my broader research aims and offer explicit answers to my empirical research questions (RQ1, RQ3-6), I turned to conducting a comprehensive 'extraction of'

asylum seekers, refugee and migrant experiences (RQ1) via an in-depth interrogation of their memories, agency representations, identity practices and daily lives and aspirations (RQ3-6). To answer these questions, I adopted a range of qualitative methods, namely open interviews and ethnographic observations, to ensure the *life stories* of my participants could more fully emerge from the evidence. Coming from a non-European migrant background, it was important to build personal rapport with my participants, spend time with them and allow for unique personal insights to emerge in the course of the fieldwork.

The insights from my interviews and ethnographic observations allowed me to go beyond the aforementioned simplistic, mainstream understanding of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant experiences and their lives and identities as mere victims and burden for the host (and to some extent sending) societies. My research allowed me to observe in real time these issues. The interviews provided novel insights and new sources of understanding of (how) the stories of these communities are told by their own members. Their moment of silence and joy, different emotional incidents offered important snapshots of what it meant for my participants to share their experiences and memories. The ethnographic observations provided in-depth information of their everyday lives and how they interact with one another, while also expressing their past memories. Considered together, my evidence illustrated how the role of memories and stories of the homeland assisted asylum seekers' and refugees' everyday lives in Estonian camps (RQ3/Article 2); their representation of agency (RQ4/ Article 3); the leisurely and ensuing identity practices of migrants (RQ5/ Article 4); and the meeting of past and present in how life stories underpinned the future plans of migrants and refugees in Estonia (RQ6/ Article 5).

The main findings of my articles offer insights into how opportunities for *story telling* could provide a new source of *motivation* for members of under-represented groups, i.e. non-

European asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to genuinely *live* in a new society. Sharing *experiences* among family and society members was identified as an important aspect in the *healing* process which these groups *must* go through (Fazel etal 2012) in order to process their traumatic past and to move forward. Refugees do not *always* hang on to struggle-related *memories*. Rather, we might get a glorified representation of their 'home life'. However, in assisting their attempts to 'move forward' and participate in different social, leisurely and religious gatherings can raise their sense of wanting to be a valued *part of* the host society. Yet, to do so, it is important to *let* refugees perform their (traditional) socio-cultural activities and not to impose often nationalistic and European-centric ideas and practices on them – just as suggested by decolonisation studies (Arat, 2021; Asher, 2013; Mayblin, 2014; Farzana, 2020, Rutazibwa, 2014).

Upon some further reflection my PhD raises an important question of the idea and concept of 'integration', including what integration means in each host country and also for different groups of "others", and whether or not we *should* want to use such terms to frame their (early) experiences. These issues together bring our attention to who constructs and who should construct narratives and images of non-European communities. Contrary to these depictions, my PhD has underscored that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants do have heterogeneous preferences, different understanding of similar everyday life issues and are, simply put, completely different individuals. In this vein, the *coloniality of power* (Quijano, 2007) and the way in which the 'refugee' label is used in European and in Estonian society often complement each other.

In the case of Estonia especially, when a political leader stated that 'Estonia will not accept even one asylum seeker' (ERR, 2019), who (Mart Helme) later became country's interior minister and then stated, 'refugees should have been pushed back in 2015' (ERR, 2020), gives

a clear indication of how elite political discourses influence public perceptions. My PhD has underscored that these perceptions do not represent real stories. Therefore, unpacking stories and memories of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are necessary to change public perceptions, as prescribed by Rutazibwa (2016) – we *need to* hear marginalised voices.

In order to respond to the demands of a more inclusive socio-political climate, more attention should be paid to sharing individual (refugee) *stories* and *experiences.* These should then be brought to the fore of mainstream socio-political discourses and in a more genuine manner than it has been done hitherto. My study is a small steppingstone in this direction. However, more research is needed about how *storytelling* practices can assist with addressing such complex and contentious topic as refugee and migrant experiences and more broadly media and politics. Even methodologically, more consideration should be given to how more ethnographic, person-centred and *storytelling* practices maybe introduced when trying to 'build bridges' between (and at times within) different communities, groups and individuals. My study strongly suggests that story telling not only varies within or across groups of people but also between individuals from a single family. This grants a sense of importance to learn more about storytelling as a technique and to unpack how and which way stories tend to vary and why. Some researchers have already begun to address this important issue (Heath, 1983; Nina, 2017; Windy, 2018). Yet much more academic work must be done about how individual stories can be connected to and reflected in the more mainstream public, media and political discourses.

It is also important to continue studying the often overlooked and smaller European countries, which tend to follow the example set by larger and core countries, like the UK or Germany, even though they may not, strictly speaking, have had the type of colonial history from which conceptions of the European 'us' and the non-European 'other' have come from. My study offered original empirical insights of an important aspect of current community

building processes, including processes of differentiation and exclusion (Siklodi, 2020) as they occur from the perspective of the 'other' and the excluded in a small European country. Whether and how these processes emerge when members of the in- and out-group communities are asked to 'interact' could be an important avenue for future research. Focus groups have already proven to be useful in depicting such interactions in the case of different groups of Europeans and so it might be a potent method for further empirical investigation of the European and non-European interaction also.

More broadly, it is necessary and timely to examine scholarly works on migration and refugee studies much more critically than it has been the tradition up to now. One possible alternative is to adopt decoloniality as a research framework with a special focus on two strategies (Rutazibwa, 2014). These include de-mythology, which refers to a need to reframe how mainstream knowledge and bias in the scholarly arguments are built; and de-silence, which seeks to bring to the fore marginalised experiences in order to produce "new" knowledge. In so doing, from a future research point of view, such a constructive, critical approach could help us understand better just how "knowledge" is produced in the Estonian and European contexts, and elsewhere.

Furthermore, more examination of the experiences of non-European asylum seekers, refugees, migrants in understudied European countries is clearly and urgently needed. While my PhD was situated in the context of Europe's "refugee crisis", there is strong indication from other studies that the findings are not exclusive to a 'crisis' scenario (Szabo et al., 2020; Mayblin, 2014). Whether and how similar the experiences of these groups are likely to be over time and in 'non-crisis' scenarios would be a useful avenue to take. Such studies could then serve as the basis for probing the on-going prevalence of the 'coloniality of power' as invoked in mainstream European (and Western) discourses today. Indeed, adopting a decolonial

approach to studying Europe's refugee and migration discourses and politics is not only emerging from my PhD as an urgent agenda item but also a necessary one if we wish to consider the 'reality' of refugee and migrant experiences and politics genuinely.

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APPENDIX 1: DATASETS

DATASET 1 consists of interviews and observation with 9 asylum seekers and 6 refugees placed in the Vao centre, and at two different houses in Tallinn and Tartu. These interviews were conducted in 2015. This material gave me an overview of South Asian refugees and how they spend their time in exile. Informants were aged between 9 to 49 years, 10 of them were male and 5 female.

Country	Gender	Age	Immigration status
Pakistan 1	M	45	Refugee
Pakistan 2	F	28	Asylum
Pakistan 3	M	35	Refugee
Pakistan 4	F	14	Refugee
Pakistan 5	M	49	Asylum
Pakistan 6	M	22	Asylum
Bangladesh 1	F	32	Asylum
Bangladesh 2	M	9	Refugee
Bangladesh 3	M	42	Asylum
Bangladesh 4	M	39	Asylum
Bangladesh 5	F	19	Refugee
Afghanistan 1	F	28	Asylum
Afghanistan 2	M	35	Asylum
Afghanistan 3	M	45	Asylum
Afghanistan 4	M	38	Refugee

DATASET 2 consists of interviews and observation with 28 refugees (with 4 from data set 1). The data includes refugees from Sri Lanka (3), India (2), Iraq (3), Syria (4), Sudan (4), Afghanistan (2), Albania (4), Cameroon (1), Bangladesh (2), Ivory Coast (1) and Palestine (2). I conducted this field work from 2016 to 2017. 16 were male and 8 female and their age was between 15 to 55 years. This material gave me an overview of refugees in Estonia and how they construct their narratives through storytelling.

Country	Gender	Age	Immigration status
Sri Lanka 1	M	28	Asylum
Sri Lanka 2	M	26	Refugee
Sri Lanka 3	F	15	Refugee
India 1	M	38	Asylum
India 2	M	29	Asylum
Iraq 1	M	31	Asylum
Iraq 2	F	30	Refugee
Iraq 3	M	55	Refugee
Syria 1	M	27	Asylum
Syria 2	M	41	Asylum
Syria 3	M	38	Refugee
Syria 4	F	22	Asylum
Sudan 1	M	35	Asylum
Sudan 2	M	24	Refugee
Sudan 3	M	26	Refugee

Sudan 4	F	29	Refugee
Afghanistan 1	F	28	Asylum
Afghanistan 2	M	35	Asylum
Albania 1	M	55	Asylum
Albania 2	F	23	Asylum
Albania 3	F	19	Asylum
Albania 4	M	29	Refugee
Cameroon 1	M	42	Refugee
Bangladesh 4	M	39	Asylum
Bangladesh 1	F	32	Asylum
Ivory Coast 1	M	35	Asylum
Palestine 1	M	21	Refugee
Palestine 1	M	35	Refugee

DATASET 3 was collected at a cricket field in Hippodroom, Tallinn, through interviews and observation during the period of April 2017 to May 2017. The dataset includes 19 Bangladeshi immigrants, 13 men and 5 women, aged between 20 to 40 years. It gave me an overview of immigrants' leisure time subculture and their identity practices in Tallinn, Estonia.

Country	Gender	Age	Immigration status
Bangladesh 6	M	28	Migrant
Bangladesh 7	M	27	Migrant
Bangladesh 8	M	31	Migrant
Bangladesh 9	M	39	Migrant
Bangladesh 10	M	20	Migrant
Bangladesh 11	M	25	Migrant
Bangladesh 12	M	25	Migrant
Bangladesh 13	M	28	Migrant
Bangladesh 14	M	34	Migrant
Bangladesh 15	M	33	Migrant
Bangladesh 16	M	37	Refugee
Bangladesh 17	M	22	Migrant
Bangladesh 18	M	21	Migrant
Bangladesh 19	M	37	Migrant
Bangladesh 20	F	29	Migrant
Bangladesh 21	F	27	Migrant
Bangladesh 22	F	26	Migrant
Bangladesh 23	F	34	Migrant
Bangladesh 24	F	24	Migrant

DATASET 4 collected through interviews. The fieldwork was carried out between December 2016 and March 2017 at the Vao centre. Participants with a refugee status were from Syria (7) and Sudan (5), living in Estonia. Some also participated in the fieldwork for Dataset 2, however 3 additional Syrian participants and 1 Sundanese participants were recruited in the course of this specific research period. Among the participants, 8 were men and 4 women, aged between 21 to 57 years. This data set explored the untold stories of participants, and their past and present experiences related to trauma.

Country	Age	Gender	Immigration status
Syria 1	M	27	Asylum
Syria 2	M	41	Asylum
Syria 3	M	38	Refugee
Syria 4	F	22	Asylum
Syria 5	M	32	Refugee
Syria 6	F	21	Refugee
Syria 7	M	57	Refugee
Sudan 1	M	35	Asylum
Sudan 2	M	24	Refugee
Sudan 3	M	26	Refugee
Sudan 4	F	29	Refugee
Sudan 5	F	23	Asylum

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT STATEMENT

I volunteer to participate in the research project conducted by Aminul Islam from Tallinn, University. I understand that the research project is about the lives and experiences of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants and it is collected for academic purposes. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name and my confidentiality will remain secure. I also understand that after the interview, I have two weeks' time to withdraw from the study, if I wish.

FORM UPR16

Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information

Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information		**Student ID:**	UP2033091
PGRS Name:	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
Department:	SCHOOL OF AREA STUDIES, HISTORY, POLITICS AND LITERATURE	**First Supervisor:**	Dr. Nora Siklodi
Start Date: (or progression date for Prof Doc students)	**October 2020**		

Study Mode and Route:	Part-time ☐	MPhil ☐	MD ☐
	Full-time ☒	PhD ☒	Professional Doctorate ☐

Title of Thesis:	"I cannot forget the treatment that I received in the detention centre": Unpacking the stories and experiences of refugees and migrants in Estonia in the context of Europe's refugee "crisis"
Thesis Word Count: (excluding ancillary data)	10727

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:
(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

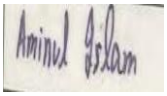
a)	Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES ☒ NO ☐
b)	Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES ☒ NO ☐
c)	Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES ☒ NO ☐
d)	Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES ☒ NO ☐
e)	Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES ☒ NO ☐

Candidate Statement:

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):	

If you have *not* submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:

My PhD is through published works and all ethical guidelines have been followed accordingly.		
Signed *(PGRS)*:		**Date:** 01.03.2021

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Refugee Quota: Is Estonia Ready to Receive Refugees? A Review of the Literature on Migration and Ethnic Minorities in Estonia

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Refugee Quota: Is Estonia Ready to Receive Refugees? A Review of the Literature on Migration and Ethnic Minorities in Estonia

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Abstract

This study analyzes literature about migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia. Following initial identification and using content analysis process, existing literature were characterized into four major patterns: definition of immigrant population in Estonia, emigration and ethnic return migration in Estonia, formation of ethnic minorities and their structure, and ethnic minorities and integration. Despite of having long historical background of emigration, return migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia; existing literature lacks focusing on refugees and ethnic minorities having background from outside Europe. New question emerged from the reviewed literature, whether Estonia is ready to accept quota refugees under EU quota system? While there is no significant academic research on existing refugees, Estonia will soon receive Quota refugees. Thus Estonia should make important changes and actions to receive refugees and to follow EU refugee quota because there are not enough research and experience on receiving non-EU refugees and/or asylum seekers.

Keywords: refugee quota, emigration, return migration, inmigración, Estonia

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Las Quotas de Refugiados: Está Estonia Preparada para Recibir Refugiados? Una Revisión Bibliográfica sobre Migraciones y Minorías Étnicas en Estonia

Aminul Islam
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Resumen

Este estudio analiza la literatura sobre migraciones y minorías étnicas en Estonia. Siguiendo la identificación inicial y mediante análisis de contenido se clasificó la bibligrafía en cuatro grandes temas: la definición de la población inmigrante en Estonia, la emigración y el retorno de la migración étnica en Estonia, la formación y estructura de minorías étnicas, minorías étnicas e integración. A pesar de contar con una larga trayectoria de emigración, de emigrantes retornados y minorías étnicas en Estonia, la literatura existente no se ha centrado en refugiados y minorías étnicas provinientes de fuera de Europa. De la revisión bibliográfica surgió una nueva pregunta: ¿Está Estonia está preparada para aceptar una cuota de refugiados bajo el sistema de cuotas de la Unión Europea (UE)? Aunque no hay investigación académica significativa sobre los refugiados, Estonia recibirá pronto su cuota de los mismos. Es por ello que Estonia debería llevar a cabo cambios y acciones importantes para recibir refugiados y para seguir la cuota de refugiados fijada por la UE ya que no hay suficiente investigación y experiencia referente a recibir refugiados y demandantes de asilo de fuera de la UE.

Palabras clave: cuota de refugiados, emigración, emigrantes retornados, inmigración, Estonia

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World is changing constantly. Homogeneous societies, which remained unchanged are quickly turning remnant of the past. Societies are becoming more diverse than ever. Social, financial and political conflicts are running on the same side where continuous migration, intercultural communication, agreements, cooperation; all testify the fact that societies are going through on an age of diversity (Sharmin, 2008). As a result of ever increasing globalization and immigration in decades, researchers and policymakers emphasized a new argument regarding the extent it is possible to ensure immigrants own identify at the same time integrate into their host societies. Countries have been designing specific programs to tackle ever increasing challenges that are emerged out of these multicultural societies to create a cohesive society (Nimmerfeldt, Schulze & Taru, 2011).

Studies on immigration in Europe after the Second World War featured diversity from movement of population to the movement of labour. In the recent decades, it has changed again; as Masso (2009) pointed out,"aims of immigrants have changed from an individual desire for a better standard of living to the desire that any standard of living is better than none" (p. 253). However, in the 1990s, European migration studies were mostly characterized with growing interest in ethnic return migration, which was poorly investigated before 1990s (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000).

Estonia makes a very interesting context and it is one of those few countries in Europe where emigration, return migration and immigration have varied in different times and in different background (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000; Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste, 2010; Kulu, 1998). By studying the specific setting of studies on migration in Estonia, this study will enhance our understanding of the pattern of migration studies in this country. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are: a) to know if Estonia is ready to receive refugee under Refugee Quota b) to review the existing major literature on migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia.

Methodology

Electronic search was carried out through social service abstracts and Google scholar, considering the fact that these databases used to inform social

science research and their access is flexible. Analysis mostly focused on manuscripts, and it also includes some other types of literature and reports that might influence researchers and policy makers. This data based search was focused from interdisciplinary perspective. The search was conducted using the terms 'ethnic minorities in Estonia', 'migrants' , 'immigrants', and 'refugee'. Search was not restricted by any certain dates or any types of publication but eventually all of them were peer reviewed journal articles considering the most relevant scientific databases-Thomson Reuters Web of Science, ERIHPLUS and Sociological Abstracts. In total, 122 publications emerged from the search, after eliminating duplicate abstracts, coming out from both databases, 72 different publications were picked. Of the 72 publications, 25 were finally omitted due to their lack of relevance in regards to the impact or citations of the articles.

A systematic literature review was carried out to analyze and to examine the patterns of existing literatures; content analysis was utilized, as it is a tool that gives the scholars to find out specific concepts within text (Markoff et al., 1975; Neuendorf, 2001; Weber, 1990). This is a process which has been utilized by Bradshaw and Graham (2007) to localize relevant literatures. Following this process, existing literature were characterized into four major patterns: i) definition of immigrant population in Estonia and to put them into perspective; ii) emigration and ethnic return migration in Estonia; iii) formation of ethnic minorities and their structure; and iv) ethnic minorities and integration.

These literatures were reviewed with an intention to identify the major gaps from the existing academic works in order to design and bring up the recent discussion on migration and to make an effective intervention for the current discussion of Refugee Quota into the whole perspective.

Definition of Immigrant Population in Estonia

In a study of immigrant population in Estonia, Saar (2009) pointed out that Immigrants are those who are living in Estonia and whose parents were born in a foreign state. In case one parent was born in Estonia and the other not, they are not considered as immigrant population. However, if one non-

Estonian is known or if parents remained undefined, the potential respondent might fall into immigrant population.

Immigrant population in Estonia in the recent time can be divided into first and second generation immigrants. First generation immigrants are those who along with their parents were born abroad. Second generation immigrants are those who are the descendents of the first generation or to be précised 'people who were born in Estonia but whose parents were born abroad' (Saar 2009, p. 9). This makes it significant perspective to study Estonian immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Ethnic composition in the broad sense of the term in Estonia experienced a drastic change, which was prompted in the years of German and Soviet occupation and Second World War. The last census that was carried out before the war was in 1934, in which the share of non-Estonian was around 12 percent. The absolute number was 134,000 people and these non-Estonian minorities mostly comprised of Russians, Germans, Swedes, Jews and Latvians. During the period of soviet rule, the share number of non-Estonian increased rather considerably up to 25 percent of the total population and the number went high up to 204,000 in 1959 when the first post war census was held. Before Soviet collapse, the last census was held in 1989 when the share of non-Estonian in the country was 39 percent, comprising populations from different soviet states, mostly from Russia and Ukraine (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003, p. 105).

According to the 2000's census, non-Estonian were 31 percent of total population, being dominated by Russian (26 percent), and followed by Ukrainian (2 percent), Belarusian (1 percent), and others (3 percent) (Van Elsuwege, 2004; Ham & Tammaru, 2011). However, an important statistics here to be noted that, according to the Estonian Ministry of Interior, at 1st September 2015, 9.4 percent of total population in Estonia were citizens of other country and persons with undetermined citizenship were of 6.3 percent. Therefore "Estonia has one of the highest share of ethnic minorities in Europe" (Ham & Tammaru, 2011, p. 315). Later parts of this paper would focus on emigration and ethnic minorities in Estonia and the concept of naturalization that arguably makes the entire discussion of Immigrants in Estonia and ethnic minorities into a complex perspective.

Emigration and Ethnic Return Migration in Estonia

Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste (2010), in their study of the formation and development of the Estonian diaspora, figured out three major waves of emigration from Estonia. First wave was East ward and took place between mid-nineteenth century and Second World War. It was the period when Estonia was part of Russian Empire. Emigration from Estonia was at its peak in this time and approximately 19 percent of total population of Estonia migrated to Russia. In 1917 the total number of Estonian diaspora was 215,000 people (Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste, 2010, p. 1159). The formation of this east ward Estonian diaspora was due to demographic transition and population boom in the rural parts of Estonia on one hand (Katus, 1989), and on the other hand contemporary politics and the period along with some social and economic factors played a vital role (Jansen, 2007). This flow of eastern diaspora begun to decrease after the First World War (Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste, 2010).

The second wave of emigration from Estonia was mostly towards western countries and it took place during the Second World War time in the form of war displaced people. Their major destination was United States, Sweden and Canada. Even though many of them initially left for Germany and from there they resettled to other western countries (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000). This was the time when Estonia experienced its second peak of emigration in its size and the total number was around 200,000 people. This number remained quite stable for a period of time (Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste, 2010). However, the main reason for this was because during the Soviet occupation both return migration and migration towards West was almost nonexistence (Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste, 2010).

However, Western diaspora started again when Estonia experienced its third wave of emigration after regaining its independence in 1991. Unlike first and second wave, the number was smaller and it took place in the form of ongoing process and its pace has been increased since 2004 when Estonia became a member of the European Union in 2004. Germany, Finland and other EU countries are major attraction for the new wave. In the recent times Estonian diaspora forms 12 percent of total Estonian population. Significant aspect is that “at the beginning of Estonian diaspora it was mostly Eastern or

Russian ward but this share has now dropped to 33 percent and Finland is soon going o replace to host the large number of Estonian community" (Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste 2010, p. 1172).

These waves of emigration lead a phenomenon of return migration. Estonia makes it very unique as it is "one of those very few countries where migrants have a varied emigration background" (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000, p. 349). These return migrants are the one who are the descendents of those who left for Russia during the end of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century, and those who left during the Second World War period to West. As Kulu (1998) pointed out that return migration is by product of emigration.

Two waves of return migration can be pointed out from the existing literature. First wave can be considered between 1940 and 1989 and the second one is when Estonia regained their independent in 1990s. About 52 to 54 thousands of Estonian emigrants returned from the Soviet Union to Estonia in the first wave (Kulu, 1997). However, return migration in the 1990s can be characterized as modest, as the numbers are low in compare to the previous wave. During the years following re-independence, about 1100-1200 Estonian diaspora returned voluntarily (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000, p. 354). During the first wave it was only the eastern diaspora who returned but in the 1990s emigrants have also returned from the west which formats 29 percent of the return migrants. However still majority of the return migrants came from the former Soviet Union and the neighboring Baltic countries, which forms 71 percent of total return migration.

Among these return migrants who emigrated to Russia, there were no significant differences to select return migration between generations, but considerable differences can be found among those who left to the West during the Second World War and their descendents. Therefore majority of return migrants are those who were born and grew up in Estonia (Kulu & Tammaru, 2000). This leads to the fact that return migrants might have an age dimension and they might fall into elder generation. It was however evident that those who returned from the West, came alone; on the other hand those who came from Russia, returned with whole family. Estonian identity however played important role to make their journey back to Estonia for both groups.

In 1998, Kulu (1998) carried out a study on return migration of West Siberian Estonians from the Omsk province and this study reveals that 'the main career of the migration behavioral norm is generation' (p. 313). He figured out that return migration over a long period of time perhaps don't depend on monetary term but people's identity, values, etc. This follows them even when the generation goes by.

However, while emigration and return migration was common feature of the migration pattern in Estonia, 'immigration begun immediately after Estonia was reincorporated into the Soviet Union in the later 1944' (Ham & Tammaru, 2011, p. 316), which actually made a significant number of ethnic minorities in Estonia who does not have Estonian background.

Ethnic Minorities in Estonia

It was not only emigration that took place in Estonia. World War Second and the years of a Soviet occupation changed Estonian Ethnic composition (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003). After the Second World War when Estonia was incorporated with Soviet Union, immigrants were needed to rebuild destroyed industrial infrastructure and housing sector. During that period "Russiafication" also took place in the Baltics (Cole & Filatotchev, 1992) and many communist party members and military personnel from Soviet army were brought to Estonia (Tiit, 1993). However, these immigrants were mainly engaged in the industrial sector (Tammaru, 2003, p. 599).

This flow of immigration to Estonia remained consistent and persisted during the post war period. The peak time however was between 1960s and 1970s (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003). Even though return migration took place in times, this continuous immigration to Estonian made a stable and positive net migration during the Soviet occupation and the non-Estonian share of total population increased considerably, rising from 3 percent of Estonia's total population in 1945 to 25 percent in 1959 (Tammaru & Kulu, 2003). According to the census which took place in 2000, the Share of non-Estonian in the country was almost 31 percent of total population (Van Elsuwege, 2004; Ham & Tammaru, 2011). Most of them were Russian followed by small number of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Finns.

However, in the common traditional sense, ethnic Russian are not Immigrants as most of them came in Estonia during the soviet period when Estonia was a part of this Soviet Union (Nimmerfeldt, Shulze, & Taru, 2011). When Estonia regained its independence and Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, these people became minority. In this period many Russians chose to return Russia but at the same time many remained in Estonia. In the Early 90s Estonian government decided to introduce naturalization policy. This policy gave automatic citizenship to 'those persons who held citizenship in 1940 and their descendents'(Schulze, 2014). This policy privileged Ethnic Estonian almost in all sectors. This policy gave roughly two-third of the country's residents to its citizenship but huge number of residents who were mostly Russian, forced to naturalization. A process where persons who desires to get the citizenship must pass language and the knowledge of Estonian law and constitution (Nimmerfeldt, Shulze & Taru, 2011). In this sense, 'through this process, state hope was either to integrate them or their out migration'. However, this policy made a number of people as stateless as only a small percentage of Russian were proficient in Estonian to get the citizenship (Park, 1994, p. 73). 32 percent of the population turned to stateless right after naturalization policy was introduced. As of April 2012, a significant number of persons remained stateless, which was 6.9 percent of countries total residents, while 7 percent of these ethnic Russian speakers taken Russian citizenship as an alternate of being stateless (Schulze, 2014, p. 26). This makes a significant perspective to see how ethnic minorities integrate themselves with the host society.

Ethnic Minorities and Integration

Research on immigrants in Estonia mostly focused on Russian speaking first or second generation immigrants putting the emphasize on educational level of immigrant population, position of native and immigrants population in the labor market, working life of native and immigrant population, ethnic minority and majority unions, their geographical location, political and civic participation of immigrants. To examine the relationship between structural, cultural, social and identificational integration dimensions among second generation Russian in Estonia, Nimmerfeldt (2011) and his colleagues

identified that in Estonia, relationship between structural and cultural integration is positive and according to this study higher level of social and identificational integration is not related to higher level of structural integration. Second generation Russian retains a strong ethnic identity and socializes primarily with other Russian. Ham and Tammaru (2011) in their research on ethnic minority and majority unions in Estonia came out with a finding that Russian speaking immigrant women are less likely to make a union with Estonians, which according to them is ultimate evidence of the integration of ethnic minorities into the host societies. In a study of political and civic participation of second generation Russian and Estonian Youth, Schulze (2014) pointed out that 'Ethnicity remains a significant predictor of political and civic participation (p. 19). It is likely that more Estonians vote in municipal elections and participate in a voluntary association than Russian'. However, the percentage of individuals with higher level of education is lower among immigrants than among native population (Saar, 2009) and they have poor Estonian language capacity. Among Ethnic minorities who continue higher education have more tendency to go abroad for their studies than majority Estonian (Pungas et al., 2015). Schulze (2014) pointed out that 'Russians with excellent Estonian language skills are more likely to participate in voluntary association than those who don't have the proficiency' (p. 22).

In a study of Ethnic Dimension of suburbanization in Estonia, Tammaru and his colleagues (2010) found that probabilities to suburbanize among ethnic minorities are lower compare to the Estonian. It is less likely that minorities would move to the rural areas. Therefore most of them concentrate to the major cities in Estonia. Leisure activities have been viewed as an important act as this is when majority and minority members meet and undertake similar activities. In a study of ethnic segmentation in leisure activities, Kamenik, Tammaru and Toomet (2015) pointed out that almost in all leisure activities there are important ethnic differences in Estonia, mostly because of their socio-economic status, where Russian speaking minorities are relatively poor. Other reason is residential pattern of ethnic groups which is different and mostly concentrated in large cities that too based on different zone, which makes them feeling being stranger in leisure time places.

Naturalization policy deeply touched ethnic minorities and their identity and value system. After regaining independence, Estonia adopted liberal and free market economy. Ethnic minorities found it difficult to find a job and those who found a job had low salary. 'As a result a large number of non Estonian populations found themselves as socially exclusive' (Leinsalu, Vagero & Kunst, 2004, p. 587). A study was done on ethnic differences in mortality in Estonia before and after the collapse of Soviet Union. The results suggested that overall life expectancy has been increased after the collapse of Soviet Union but Russian speaking ethnic minorities had higher mortality than Estonian mainly because of their poverty, political upheaval and over alcohol consumption (Leinsalu, Vagero & Kunst, 2004). Differences in terms of leisure time activities, civic, political participation, and educational level or mortality rates have been clearly evident from the literatures. However, Varnik and Kolves (2005) pointed out that because of the introduction of naturalization policy, ethnic Russians lost their privileged status that they were receiving during the soviet period and it may have caused stress leading them to commit even suicide. During the soviet period suicide rate was lowest among Russian which has now increased significantly and their suicide rate is very much higher than Estonians.

Refugee Research and Estonian Current Reality

Scholarly works on migration research in Estonia covered its historical background of emigration and return migration along with immigration to Estonia; its Russian speaking ethnic minorities and their integration aspect in different sectors. However a significant gap can be observed, as very few studies have focused on other groups of migrants in Estonia. Ukrainian, Belarusian ethnic minorities for example has not been emphasized in the scholarly works. Hyvonen (2008, p. 421) studied Finish immigrant women in Estonia to see their acculturation between two groups, one living in the finish enclave isolated from Estonian society and the other into the Estonian mainland. Any notable difference in terms of interpersonal contacts back their home in Finland between these groups was not found. On the other hand she found respondents, who had weak ties and they don't have any social contacts within Estonian society and they even preferred to use Finish

welfare and healthcare services. This was an interesting study that opens up to carry out more future research on immigrants who are relatively less in number but have similar ethnic or language background with Estonia.

According to the most recent statistics, 3 percent immigrants in Estonia represent 'other' groups (Van Elsuwege, 2004; Ham & Tammaru, 2011). Who belong to this group and where are they from needs to be studied thoroughly. Refugee studies have been a significant part of migration studies around the world (Nourpanah, 2014; Witmer & Culver, 2001). Existing migration literatures in Estonia do not cover this group of migrant people. Almost as if this country does not have any international refugees**.** While the discussion on refugees and their resettlement goes on along with hegemonic discourse, the number of refugees has been increasing all over the world. EU countries for instance have received more than six hundred thousand asylum seekers in 2014 compared to 2013, when the number was around four hundred thousand (Bourgeais, 2015), which makes fourteen percent increase of the evaluation percentage from 2013 to 2014 . Estonia joined in the European Union in 2004 and Schengen treaty in 2007. In 1997 Estonia ratified the 19951 convention relating to the status of refugees and the corresponding 1967 protocol. Estonia has traditionally been viewed as least attractive country for asylum seekers. According to Inter Press Service, it might be the case that Estonian living standard is lower than those of its neighboring countries (Manni, 2013). Estonian Human rights center in their report on refugees addressed that the number of asylum seekers has been quite low and it might be the case that general public is not aware of this issue and unfortunately this topic has not been a priority on the governmental level either (Saar, 2013). In this report, Estonian Human rights center actually used their data up to the year 2011. However, in 2009 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 40 people and in 2011 it was 67. Most recent data from Eurostat represents a very significant story, as of 2013 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 95 and in 2014 it went high up to 155 and the evaluation rate is 63 percent which is even higher than overall EU rate.

However, all these information and statistics represents before the death of a three year old Syrian boy who washed ashore in turkey while aiming to get a shelter in Europe with his family because of the Syrian war. According to an American news agency, this has changed the entire migration situation

in Europe (Clarke & Shoichet, 2015). His dead body was found near the sea side in Turkey, this photo went viral on media and this was the time when Europe received high number of migrants and refugees. This influx of migrants and refuges in Europe made it as crisis and to handle this crisis, European Commission president announced the proposal of "120,000 additional asylum seekers will be distributed among EU nations, with binding quotas". Postimees, an Estonian popular newspaper, reports that according to this new proposal, Estonia will have to receive 373 migrants (http://news.postimees.ee/3319797/estonia-to-get-373-migrants-according-to-commission-s-new-plan) Estonian Interior minister Hanno Pevkur confirmed that as a part of the quota system, Estonia will receive 150 Refugees very soon in its first phase (Erlich, Pulver & Toomas, 2015).

Discussion

Migration research in Estonian society has mostly been built on four major dimensions: emigration from Estonia and return migration of Estonian population to Estonia; Immigrant population in Estonian society; characteristics and structure of ethnic minorities and; integration aspect of ethnic minorities in different sectors. None of them particularly focused on refugees or immigrants having ethnic background outside of Europe.

Estonia as a global society and a part of European Union and its organizations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees might face new challenges. These Quota refugees would probably have non-European ethnic background. In a study of readiness to accept immigrants in Europe, Masso (2009) carried out a research asking question, whether they would like to have immigrants of different race and ethnicity and from outside Europe; Estonia placed at the bottom of chart just scoring 22 right after Hungary which scored 23 being the lowest, when Iceland and Sweden were at the top scoring 1 and 2 respectively. This was a scale of 23, where 1 being highest and 23 being lowest. This might reflect to the fire incidence that took place at Vao Center (house of Estonian asylum seekers) in September 2015, while refugee and migration crisis was at its peak in Europe. Later Estonian prime minister informed that 'An evil person set fire to refugee's house' (Erlich, Pulver & Toomas, 2015).

In the globalized world and a part of EU, Estonia will have to face migration and refugees crisis and will have to deal with the new Quota system. It is quite often perceived that humanitarianism is the ideology of hegemonic states in the era of a globalization. Chimni (2000, p. 244) in her study of relationship of globalization and humanitarianism stated that 'while humanitarianism has always had a presence in the international politics, it has never had the salience it possesses in the recent days'. While there is no significant academic research on existing refugees, Estonia will soon receive Quota refugees. Question can be asked whether Estonia is ready to accept quota refugees under EU quota system which has been introduced recently. Despite of having long historical background of emigration, return migration and ethnic minorities, Estonia have less experience hosting non-European ethnic minorities and refugees. Estonia should make important changes and actions to receive refugees and to follow EU refugee quota because 1) there are not enough research/experience on receiving non-EU refugees and/or asylum seekers; and 2) because as statistics (Masso, 2009) show that Estonia is one of the harshest countries of the EU in regards to the refugees quota. Therefore their policy makers, academician and researchers will have to address this aspect to tackle the challenges which are emerging from migration crisis to build up a cohesive society.

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Constructing narratives through story telling: A study of refugees in Estonia

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Abstract
Very little investigation has been done on refugees in Estonia and their construction of narratives in a new society. It is believed that refugees portray their memories of their own country while in exile to be able to create their present individuality in a new land and to adapt to a new culture. This paper has attempted to investigate refugees who were placed at refugee accommodation centre in Estonia and to analyse their present and past memories and stories to associate with their coping mechanisms, while they relate their stories in adapting to a new land. Based on qualitative study and from in-depth interviews, this paper brings out the argument that despite being displaced from their homeland, refugees portray their homeland as idyllic stories; family and community life are emphasized with the contrast of individualism. This paper argues that specific narratives can produce double marginalized people while at the same time stories told and memories are significant in forming agency to establish counter-narratives.

KEYWORDS: refugees, Estonia, narrative, storytelling, identity

Introduction
We are living in an era in which changes are constant, and societies that remained unchanged are quickly becoming diverse. Socio-economic and political aspects and the consequence of global communication and conflicts testify that we are going through an era of diversification. Cooperation between countries, business organizations, intercultural communication, and human migration are the features of today's world that signify the fact that countries and societies are changing and diversity is a part of it (Islam 2016).

From within these diverse societies, there are people who are forced to take part of this diversity. We are however living in an era which is 'age of the refugee, people who are displaced and mass migration' (Said 2000:174). The global number of refugees has been increasing over the past decades. (Islam 2016). European Union countries (EU) have been receiving large numbers of refugees in recent years. More than six hundred thousand asylum seekers were received by the EU countries in 2014; there were four hundred thousand in the previous year (Bourgeais 2015). Therefore, the rate of increase is quite high.

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Traditionally Estonia has been viewed as less attractive country for the Asylum seekers and refugees (Islam 2016). In 2004, Estonia joined the EU, and in 2007 they signed the Schengen treaty. The 1951 UN convention relating to the status of refugees was signed by the Estonian state in 1997. According to the Estonian State portal on Refugees 'Estonia has received a relatively small number of applications for international protection compared to other EU member states, but the number of applications has increased every year' (Valitsus 2016).

The number of application that Estonia received from 1997 to May 2015 was 709, out of which 114 were granted protection. However, this number is on the increasing side; in five months of 2015, Estonia received 90 applications for international protection and it was expected that this number would be even higher for the next period of time (Islam 2016). However, all these statistics are before the crisis that was evident in summer 2015 in Europe, when influxes of migrants and refuges made it a crisis; to be able to handle it European commission president announced the proposal that 120,000 additional asylum seekers will be distributed among EU nations with binding quotas. According to the state portal of Estonia, Estonia's positions on the refugee quota 'Estonia does not intend to remain a bystander in the Mediterranean crisis, Estonia does not dispute the refugee distribution formula' (Valitsus 2016). Estonian received the first war refugees on March 29, 2016 as a relocation quota.

Drawing on the existing literature on migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia, Islam (2016: 293), in his studies on 'Refugee Quota: is Estonia ready to receive refugees,' stated that 'migration research in Estonia mostly been built on four major categories and none of them particularly focused on refugees or immigrants having ethnic background outside Europe.' In the 2009, there was research on readiness to accept immigrants in Europe, Masso (2009) asked the question of how would they like to have people from outside Europe, and from different races and ethnicities; Estonia ranked at the bottom of the table, scoring 22, just above Hungary, scoring 23, while Iceland and Sweden were at the top respectively. This research was done in a scale of 23, rank 1 being highest and 23 being lowest. In this study, Islam (2016) also pointed out that Estonia has very little experience in handling migrants win non-European background, as existing studies are mostly on Russian minorities in Estonia and their integration aspect in different sectors. The Estonian state portal also suggests that the number of asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan have been increasing in Estonia, while before it was mostly from Russia, Georgia and Ukraine (Valitsus 2016). Islam (2016: 294) pointed out that 'policy makers, academician [sic] and researchers will have to address this aspect to tackle the challenges which are emerging from migration crisis to build up a cohesive society.'

With this background of asylum seekers and refugees in Estonia, this study aims to provide contributions to the literature by exploring Asylum seekers and refugees in Estonia and their cooperative memories about their experience at the refugee centre and their own country while they are dislocated to a European country and to utilise their stories of present and past to construct their current and future self or identity (Chamberlain & Leydesdroff 2004; Cohen 1996; Brubaker 2005). To be precise, this study attempted to explore the role of memory and narrative of the continuing process that the refugees

and asylum seekers in Estonia are undergoing. The aim is to contribute to the literature that investigates the importance of storytelling, as well as past and present memory from asylum seekers and refugees.

Asylum seekers and refugees in Estonia and their placement

Over the last 18 years, from 1997 to May 2015, Estonia received a total of 709 applications; among them, permission was granted to 114 people, which includes 74 refugees and 40 who received complementary protection.

In 2012, the number of applications was 77, in 2013 it went up to 97, and in 2014 it was 147. By mid-2015, Estonia received 90 applications, and it was expected that the number in total for that year would go past 250. Therefore, the number of asylum seekers and refugees are on the increase.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for helping and finding residence for refugees. For family or individuals who seek asylum for protection, state provides housing centre, which in a village called Vao, in Laane-Viru County. It takes around one-and-half hours by train to get to that village from the capital city of Tallinn, and this is the only convenient way to travel to the capital city.

At the end of December 2016, the Vao accommodation centre housed 73 persons. Of those, 54 are asylum seekers and 19 are refugees with a residence permit. The centre housed 24 children and 15 females, comprising 11 families.

Once a person receives international protection (i.e. refugee status), he or she is not supposed to stay at the accommodation centre but should be living in a home rented from any social housing or on the free market; the Ministry of Social Affairs helps them find it.

At the end of 2016, the asylum seekers and refugees were from 16 different countries. The largest numbers of residents are from Ukraine, Armenia, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Georgia. The number of applicants from outside Europe is rising (Valitsus 2016).

The village has a small shop, which has mostly very basic grocery items, but residents from Vao centre usually go to the nearby town, which is 15 minutes far by bus: there are usually two buses a day that go back and forth from the town to the village.

After refugees are granted the residence permit house rent, essential translation services and Estonian language instruction costs are covered by the state for up to two years (Valitsus 2016). It is expected that refugees should learn the language and other social aspects so that they could adapt swiftly and find a job to become self-dependent. However, refugees (not asylum seekers) are allowed to access state pensions, family benefits, employment services, and other benefits like any permanent resident of Estonia. Asylum seekers, who are waiting to get their decision, are not entitled to work at that time; however, from 2017 it is expected that once they have waited six months after their application, they might be allowed to work.

There is a firm distinction between asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers are those who have asked for protection, and their application is in process; refugees are

those who applied and received protection, therefore they have residence permit and can enjoy all other benefits like any other permanent residents in Estonia. Asylum seekers also have permit to stay but on different ground; this does not allow having many benefits but to stay and wait for their decision. In this waiting time, they are placed in an accommodation centre and are given 130 euros per month for their living expenses. They also have some medical services and language lessons.

Storyline

For the migrants, narrative is quite significant for making sense of their lives (Portelli 1998). In a study of migrants, Farah (2000: 37) stated that 'stories poured out, their memory flowing out of their mouth with a broken string.' By using narrative, people exchange their memories of incidence and produce each other's accounts to build certain memories of a group (Assmann 1995). Told stories have their plots, themes that come through them, and the way they tell the stories are certainly driven by their cultural narratives. (Passerini 1987). We can find symbols from told language and narrative; as Bruner (1987: 10) pointed out 'Our mind needs cultural symbols to express.' Therefore, whatever we try to make relations and whichever way to relate has its tools at our disposals. Hence, a society or a particular group tells its story by using narratives and by its cultural framework (Ramsden & Ridge 2012)

Stories can be a strategy that solves problems and leads the present situation to validate the experiences (Connerton 1989; Manderson & Allotey 2003). Therefore, it has inspired many researchers to investigate on narratives and how we talk about current events and not just to focus on what is being said, to construct 'an unmatched opening into opinions or subjective experience' (Ochberg 1988: 173).

By recalling experiences and making choices on narratives, individuals or groups of people could retake their control over life after any major events like displacement or any kind of disaster in life; Frank (2003) used the term "survivorship" to interpret how people could take control over their lives. Riessman (2002), in a study on narratives, developed a proposition that what we exclude or include in narrativization and how we plot things and how they are being meant depends on human agency and our imagination. Storytelling at times highlights immigrants' resettlement and aids in constructing or reconstructing identity (Chavez 1994), which creates an opportunity to make a vision for future. Therefore, the focus of this study is to gather narratives to create comprehension of experiences from the refugee centre and life in a new country and memories of their own country and to have some resonance with the asylum seekers and refugees in Estonia.

Narrativization and memory telling

Existing literature regarding memory tends to indicate that individuals attempt to reconstruct and restore their order by using memory, which helps them to term their past in a recent context. (Agnew 2005; Malkki 1992; Jedlowski 2001). Agnew (2005: 20) stated that 'our memories can generate new definition and sense of our understanding for our past and also for our present.' Refugees have complicated ways of explaining their experiences

and asserting a specific place as their homeland. Malkki (1992), in a study on refugees, pointed out that 'because of mobile nature of people and being displaced, they continuously invent homes and homeland, while it is impossible to stay at their past land or territories.' Transnational families reconstruct their identity at times building a vessel for immigrant's belongings and non-belongings when in search for a place which can be called as home (Christou 2003; Sutton 2004). Peggy Levitt (2004) wrote a report where she stated that home can mean more than one country.

The argument that Halbwachs (1980) made about memories is quite significant. Individuals tend to remember and locate their memories through their group memberships, religious identity, or the class with which they are affiliated. Kingship is also another aspect through which an individual can gain and remember memories. Schwartz (1998) argued that memory is not something static, rather he argued that it comes from dynamic influence or interaction between and among members of a community. As an individual or group, people tend to forget and reinterpret their past and invent new features of their life through shared common experiences (Middleton & Edwards 1990). It is quite evident that whatever we remember or comes out as memory, much of it actually influenced by our membership or families, different social groups or societies what Zerubavel (1996) termed "mnemonic socialization". When we remember something of our past, we try to recall it through what our parents and elders told or tell us about it; through enduring memories, we attempt to identify ourselves (ibid.).

In this study, I started with the standpoint that memory is a complicated matrix of narrative in terms of current or present requisites, both at the collective and individual levels (Ramsden & Ridge 2012). This study particularly focused on the narratives of asylum seekers and refugees, considering them as a group of refugees and about their resettlement in Estonia. The focus is on the reconstruction of memories and narratives to see them as a vehicle for combining management issues in the present. Therefore, this study investigated how refugees in Estonian form their connection with each other, experience and sense of belongings in a new country through storytelling and memories of the past and present.

Methods

Participants selection

Fieldwork was carried in two different times; the first field work was from March 2015 to May 2015; the second was in December 2016. The selected fieldwork site was the village of Vao – the centre for asylum seekers and refugees in Estonia. The police and boarder guard service gave permission to carry out the fieldwork; afterwards, good communication was established also with the manager of the centre.

Vao currently houses 72 persons, of which 54 are asylum seekers and 19 are refugees with a residence permit. Members are from different ethnic groups. At present, the centre accommodates persons from 16 different countries: Iraq, Ukraine, Palestine, Georgia, Armenia, Sri Lanka, India, Afghanistan, Albania, Sudan, Iran, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Bangladesh, and Syria. The centre houses 15 women; there are 24 children and 11 families (Valitsus 2016).

According to the UNHCR definition, 'An Asylum Seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed' (UNHCR 2016) and refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution. They are defined and protected in international law and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk' (UNHCR 2016). However, according to Estonian law, an asylum seeker is the one who has applied for protection, and a refugee is the one who has received protection and has been given a residence permit card with all other facilities that a permanent residence in Estonia receives. In this study, both asylum seekers and refugees are considered to be refugees (Gerritsenetcl 2006) and that they have common feelings of being displaced from their homeland and shared the experience of living in an accommodation centre while in exile.

The findings of this study are based on group interviews with 24 refugees; 19 were men, and five were women. They are from Sri Lanka (3), India (2), Iraq (3), Syria (4), Sudan (4), Afghanistan (2), Albania (4), Cameroon (1), Bangladesh (2), Ivory Coast (1), and Palestine (2); 18 of the 24 participants among the group interview agreed to be interviewed individually (16 men and 2 women from Sri Lanka, India, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Syria). Interviews that were carried out individually conducted with eight key informants who were selected by observing and also suggested by other fellow refugees (Yin 2003) These eight key informants are from Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Sudan and Syria.

Collection of data

It is difficult to access refugees, and often they are termed "invisible actors" (Bond & Voutria 2007). In a country like Estonia, immigrants from third countries can be identified easily, as there are very few immigrants from outside Europe. (Islam 2016). It is at the same time very hard to access as Bond and Voutria (2007: 283) figured 'perhaps they are visible and can be identified but largely inaccessible for researcher[s] for different reasons.' Refugees are given a support person in Estonia to receive their primary information and supports and to become settled. A network was established with a support person. Through that support person, access to the Vao Centre was possible, and I gained access to the participants.

Staying two months at the Vao Centre and living like them helped build a relationship with them. 'This assisted in creating bonds of trust and facilitated openness and engagement in the research process' (Ramsden & Ridge 2012: 230) Throughout the study, notes were taken constantly, and all the events that took place during the fieldwork, and all the interactions among them were observed and have been included in the analysis. A semi-structured approach was taken to conduct both group and individual interviews (Denzin & Lincol 1994). To be able to switch to a storyline mood of communication, open-ended questions were utilized which helps participants to make attention to certain aspects of their story of migration process and the process they undergone their settlement experiences and the set up through which they have been through. To elicit narratives, their past and presents situations were investigated to determine their aspirations for the future.

Participants had enough time to express their lives in their own way of speaking so that whatever aspect is significant for the study comes out. This also provides the possibility to obtain narratives on the aspects about which they are concerned. The participants

were placed at a detention centre before they were placed at the Vao Centre, where this study was carried out; therefore, stories had a starting point and those are relevant to this study. Phenomena included communication, treatment, migration. and settlement issues in a new country as well as views about detention and current centre and the country where they currently belong.

Group interviews lasted around two hours, and they were audio-recorded; the permission was granted from both the centre manager and from the participants. All the interviews were conducted in English, except two individual interviews that were conducted in Bangla, the language this researcher also speaks. All participants were fluent in English, which helped them to express their narratives and to give voice to their concerns. All notes were taken in Bangla and then translated and transcribed into English. Most of the individual interviews were around 40 minutes long and some of lasted even for more than two hours while lunch or dinner were taken together with the participants. To obtain the narratives, individual interviews were very significant. These individual interviews not only helped to discern insights but also created a path to validate the data that were obtained from the group interviews.

Analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, they were checked by the participants for any kind of misconceptions and to make them more accurate. All the names in the analysis are pseudonyms. Transcripts were checked and rechecked to inspect any common themes to create narratives. (Morse & Field 1995). It also aids in spotlighting contents and its differences. Transcripts were continuously reviewed to construct and categorise and to find links between categories. (Browne & Sullivan 1999). The main comprehension of narratives of their present and past experiences was identified from the final categorisation.

Limitations

Most of the participants were men, and the findings of this analysis reflect their views. While a diverse sample of participants were interviewed from different countries and different ethnic groups, this study did not set out to see the difference between these participants; it considered them as a set group of refugees. Furthermore, this study did not intend to generalize the findings to all refugees in Estonia but to explore the situations of the refugees living in the Vao Centre and to give priority to their own narratives that they construct.

Findings

Collective narratives became evident despite the fact the participants come from different backgrounds; they mentioned idyllic interactions both in the cultural and social dimensions with their own community before being displaced, and that includes strong ties with family and support. The image of their country remained a place for joy and peace despite being displaced from their country. Observation supports the fact that memories, as such, conveys the story of leaving the life being ‘attractive’ and a feeling of the fact that they belong there and a sense of safety:

> When my country was stable, and everything was running smoothly, it was very nice and lovely. The environment is nice, and weather is so good that you could go anywhere by foot and can spend time on the street, talking with other people even with stranger. You will find nice foods on the street and they are fresh (Sohan, 31, Iraq).

Despite their cultural and social diversity, all participants spoke of strong family bonding and family support involving unity and being part of an extended family. Family takes an important part of their everyday life storytelling and whenever they got the chance to express it, they mentioned it with joy. Family also takes the role of supporting each other as an obligation.

> If you get married, you don't leave home; you rather stay at home. It's our tradition. Sometimes only one member is working, and the rest are enjoying their lives being part of the family. We take care of each other. As a part of extended family, you contribute to your family in many ways. If you have a job, you contribute financially; if you stay at home you cook, you clean the house and sometimes we just keep company with others. There is no depression because we always discuss things with each other and problems can be solved this way (Sahed, 28, Sri Lanka).

Not only family but also activities outside the home are considered as mingling points or socializing by the participants. The concept of "community" is regarded as the sense of interactions with neighbours and relatives. Peaceful and happy interactions with the neighbours have also been central to their memories.

> You actually know everyone who your neighbour is. Children used to play with them outside. Elders gossip at home with other neighbours. It is beautiful culture. If a new neighbour comes into the locality, we try to get to know them by inviting them and sometimes they also invite others. As the weather is good and warm, you do not need to stay at home all the time, so you know all other homes and their members while you are out in the street and spend time outside home. You can even sit under a lamppost together and talk (Rahim, 35, Sudan).

Relationship with neighbours was explained as being a part of the social interaction that is the central part of their everyday life as they extend their stories:

> While cooking something, if discovered you don't have salt at home, you do not go to shop. You turn to your neighbour. We at times go to market together and even exchange things with each other (Rahela, 28, Afghanistan).

The reason for migration and their trajectories differs considerably; their narratives were linked to the memories of being displaced and affirmative relationships of family and community in their homeland. When pushed and asked about their displacement period and difficulties that they have been through, five participants elaborated how their situations changed during the difficult period and in which way in relations to safety. At

the same time, they bring out their focus on the pre-difficulty period and their memories of a beautiful country. Their way of describing home then become a viewing a past that they could live and the reference points out the strain of the current situation (Field 1998; Refslund Sørensen 1997)

Their periods of difficulties of their homeland highlights their longing of the past and all the memories of their homeland are before that:

> I have two kinds of stories or memories one before I was displaced and the other is when everything was running good in my country. My country was the most amazing country that I could ever find. I do not say that I am not liking Estonia, but your homeland is your homeland, and you know every bit of it (Saher, Albania).

Participants in this study focused on positive narratives on their country in contrast to some studies on migration (Ryan 2001). Participants did recognize their countries situations and how unsafe it is for them, but then turn to memories of their happiness.

> There is no proper government because of war but still when I remember my country I could feel happiness. I was always laughing back home. I cannot remember the last time that I laughed here in Estonia (Asfaq, 31, Iraq).

Living in the detention centre

Most participants had to stay in the detention centre, which they termed a "prison" before they were placed at the Vao Centre, which is their current place of accommodation. Thus, most participants had a starting point when they tell their story on Estonia and create narratives. Stories about their status of being refugee included mostly the period they spent in the detention centre and waiting to be transferred to the Vao Centre, where this research was carried out; which frames their narrative in Estonia:

> Once you are left from your country without passport and you are placed in a prison, being refugee becomes your only identity. You are a refugee and spend your time with other people in the prison who do not have any option to go anywhere but to stay in a prison. So, you are in the middle of an ocean (Ruhan, 31, Iran).

Many participants conveyed stories of treatment, not feeling human in the detention centre, and how this haunts them, which makes it difficult to cope even when they are placed in relatively nice place to stay:

> It is a nice place. You can go shopping, buy things, and eat. You are given money and you can sleep and talk with your family members back home. While I was in prison, I was given the chance to talk with my family only once in a week and only for five minutes with my own money. There was no internet, no communication tools. I felt I was stuck like a mouse gets caught in a box (Viki, 38, India).

A sense of not fitting in and being stuck in the middle of nowhere continues for a number of participants. They did not refer of being victims of racism, but the participant's stories generated narratives of racism in general. In research on Finish immigrants, Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) found that in Finland. Somali refugees are being treated more negatively than any other immigrant group. Despite of the fact that the Estonian government is focusing on multiculturalism, it was evident from stories told by the participants that they had a view of their narratives on local structures.

> In the detention centre, even the amount of food was so low that you would feel hungry all the time. Food was given the same to all kind of people. Doesn't matter how big or small you are and how much need you have, you will get the same quantity. I was still relatively lucky as I am not a black. I think black refugees from Africa were treated even badly and refugees from Europe who look alike them were treated much better than us (Srimohan, 26, Sri Lanka).

Stories told by the participants communicated a feeling that their label of identity as refugee will not vanish, and this identity might place them into difficult situation to cope and adapt into a new society. Bhabha (1994: 12) stated that attempts to change the status 'the border-line community migration' would not be vanished. Vulnerability might be influenced by their economic condition, cultural standpoint, religious belief, and skin colour, as Fangen (2006) stated that refugees from Somalia might face a more vulnerable situation than other because of their poor financial condition downward and standard of living.

> I tried to find an apartment for my family after getting the permission and residence permit in the town. But I could not find any. Initially house owners willing to rent to me but whenever told that I am a refugee they hung up. I think it would be the same case while I would start looking for a job (Nish, 23, Afghanistan).

Being labelled as a refugee and the memories from the detention centre were the central narratives for some participants which even influenced two of the participants to change their status. Treatment from the host societies and the prejudice that they receive might reinforce their ethnic identity (Fangen 2007). While two participants decided to change their migration status, narratives about their homeland continue:

> In my opinion, it would be very hard to fit in this society as a refugee. My appearance is different in this country. Not all people are bad here. Some are very good, but some just do not accept us. I cannot forget the treatment that I received in the detention centre. I do not think even in my country in a normal situation people will be treated as badly. I have decided to find out a work. I am educated. If I get proper work, I will stay here as a worker not as a refugee (SM, 21).

Feelings of anxiety and not being focused on them by society and its human rights organization were evident. Participants continued their narratives on institution and memories that they faced at the detention centre. One participant even asked this researcher to do fieldwork in the centre:

> Since you are researching us, you had better visit the prison to see the real scenario. We are far better here at the Vao Centre (Meraj, 30, Iraq).

Feeling of being lost and life in Estonia

> Before arriving in Estonia, I imagined that it would be a very beautiful nice European country. It is very difficult being away from homeland than I anticipated. I have to accept it and will have to recognize that I am here, and I have to get used to it, but I miss my life back in my country (Raihan, 21, Palestine).

Their memories from the past in relation to their family and community drove their experience of their current life in Estonia. In a migratory situation, identification and habituation take place in sites, referred by Christou (2006) when he researched Greek migrants. Trying to find identity and feeling of belongings are not restricted by the home or the host societies. One Sudanese participant stated that:

> I have lost all my family members, my relatives and even neighbourhood back home but I had a beautiful life there. My memories are now my asset. They belong to me, and I will live my life with all these memories (Johnny, 24, Sudan).

As participants are quite detached from their networks back home, they conveyed the message of being alone and sad feeling while living in Estonia and a sense of disconnection. Despite of the fact that once they were placed at the accommodation centre from the detention period, they had the global communication system in the form of internet and other tools, they still felt they are disconnected with their former networks. Sense of family and community continues:

> The fact is in our country we live in an extended family, here we have to live like a nuclear family. I cannot have all my family member or neighbours here (Rahima, Palestine).

The sense of "self" and the culture of individualism was encountered by the most participants when they arrived in the accommodation centre. Most participants told stories which focus on collectiveness than individual self. They stated that they have been asked to focus on their selves rather than others or any country mate:

> Once I asked our accommodation centre's manager to provide four pieces of bed sheet for four of us from Sudan. I was told that I should only ask for myself. If the rest need, they should come and ask themselves. In our country, we do not feel this way. Even if you are not a family member, if you are just a known person, you could still do things collectively (Johnny, 26, Sudan).

Despite the difficulties that the participants faced at the detention centre and other senses of not fitting in, the narratives indicate that many participants are trying to cope

with their new atmosphere and are optimistic about re-establishing themselves in this new country and have to find a community feeling with other migrants or fellow refugees. Their collective narratives construct a narrative network through which refugees in Estonia can cope with the new environment:

> We need to come forward, and thankfully we know each other being there at the detention centre and also here and the accommodation centre. We have to work together and should help each other if any problems arrived. We need to get a way to build a strong refugee community in Estonia, so we could help each other and could show to the world that we are doing well (Jetendro, 29, India).

Respondents also focused on the language and the hope to gain better understanding of Estonian culture and system. This would help them to have better outlook of themselves and their children. Many participants had the idea that becoming established in this country depended on learning the language and forming relationships with not only own refugee community members but also with the host community:

> Going to school is important. There you learn language and you might have option to build up friendship with others. My children are going to the school and I am hopeful that they will have a better future in this country (a mother from Albania).

Discussion

The participants told stories in connection to their experience of the detention centre and the accommodation centre where they are placed afterward. The argument can be made that their glamorised memories of their homeland could be an obstacle to adapting to life in Estonia. This analysis presents the role of memories and the narratives in explaining refugees. Refugees are presented as significant agents with their own capabilities and resources; at the same time, it must be recognised that they have lost many things back home and that they have better experiences in the back of their minds. The outcome of this story telling and creating narratives was not viewed to prompted any policy making but to provide an insight about the ways refugees in Estonia think of their country and create narratives of adapting in Estonia; as Green (2004: 40) pointed out: 'A sense of coherent identity can be provided by composing our past.' This study also tried to identify how their social connection at the detention centre narritivize the host country in their story telling.

Participants' past and contemporary experiences along with their identity and the creation of narratives are interconnected. The findings of this study suggest that participants being displaced from their own country, and not being treated the way they portrayed a European country and coping with a country, creates a narratives that could either make them feeling being marginalized, which is different from the findings of some other previous researchers (Fangen 2007; Ramsden & Ridge 2012); this can be termed as "doubly marginalized people", considering the fact that the traumatic feeling that they faced while being displaced from their homeland. At the same time, many participants could create new narratives to help them to combine past and current situations to cope in their new land.

This study touches also on how participants draw their past idealistic way. This accentuate how this construction is important to adapt their present situation, where the narrative on their homeland becomes the source of the way of re-establishing themselves in a new country. This finding can be matched with findings that Eastmond (1993) and Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) in their studies pointing out that what is familiar is a means of coping.

Understanding the participant's present experiences related to detention centre and their stories about it, told as a negative narrative, was the key point of the investigation. *Being* a refugee became the central point of their narration when they were asked about the experiences of being a refuge. This might be a point of departure for the researchers who deals with refugees and for the policy makers to figure how it can be dealt with; as Islam (2016) in his study on Estonia pointed out, very little academic researchers have been done on refugees in the country and since the country is receiving refugees the 'question can be asked whether Estonia is ready to receive … refugees who will mostly have background from outside Europe' (Islam 2016: 294).

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Povzetek

Zelo malo je raziskanega o beguncih v Estoniji in njnihovi konstrukciji naracije v novi družbi. Predvidoma begunci orisujejo spomine svoje domovine v izgnanstvu z namenom izgradnje svoje sedanje individualnosti v novi deželi in prilagajanje novi kulturi. Članek proučuje begunce, ki so nastanjeni v begunskem centru v Estoniji in anlizira njihove sedanje in pretekle spomine ter zgodbe, ki jih povezujejo z coping mechanisms, ko se s svojimi zgodbami prilagajajo na novo deželo. Članek temelji na kvalitativni študiji poglobljenih intervjujev in argumentira, da begunci svojo domovino orisujejo kot idilično zgodbo kljub being displaced; družino in življenje v skupnosti poudarjajo kot nasprotje individualizmu. Analiza kaže, da lahko specifične pripovedi proizvajajo dvojno marginalizirane posameznike, hkrati pa so ubesedene zgodbe in spomini pomembni gradniki za gradno proti-naracij.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: begunci, Estonija, naracija, pripovedovanje zgodb, identiteta

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A study of South Asian Refugee's Settlement Experiences in Estonia

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Introduction

In a constant changing world, societies that remained homogenous are quickly turning a remnant of the past. Continuous migration, intercultural communication, agreements, cooperation, war, societal, financial and political conflicts all testify to the fact that we are going through on an age of diversity. In a multiethnic society, people having multiple identities are trying to use different strategies to achieve their goals; and to achieve them, they face different experiences (Sharmin 2008). Therefore, new argument emerged regarding the extent it is possible to ensure immigrants own identity at the same time to cope new culture of a host society. It is also a matter of fact whether it affects the same way in different heterogeneous migrant people. Sociological theories and research have generally focused on specific aspects on forced migrants such as, demographic characteristic of refugees, decision making, economic and psychological adaptation of refugees in the receiving countries are the most focused aspects on forced migration issues. (Richmond 1988). Issues surrounding integration and settlement of refugees remain largely on mental health of refugees into new societies and most literatures don't provide a detailed argument about how "culture shock" resulting from resettlement into a new society(Nourpannah 2014). "There is an extensive scholarly literature criticizing politically silenced and deliberately muted construct of refugees"(58). Popular images of refugees in the society are as victim and perhaps they suffer agency (Nyers 2006). Is this the case for all refugees or it is a metaphor? By studying the specific setting of refugees in Estonia, this study will enhance our understanding of the experiences of refugees and their subsequent settlement.

It is quite often perceived that humanitarianism is the ideology of hegemonic states in the era of globalization. Chimni (2000) in her study of relationship of globalization and humanitarianism stated that "while humanitarianism has always had a presence in the international politics, it has never had the salience it

possesses in the recent days"(244). This has not been changed even in the recent time. Dandy(2009) in her research shown refugees and their resettlement issues and how could itaffect even a local level with the power of hegemony which exists in the globalized world. While the discussion on refugees and their resettlement goes on along with hegemonic discourse, the numbers of refugees have been increasing all over the world. EU countries for instance have received more than six hundred thousand asylum seekers in 2014 compared to 2013, when the number was around four hundred thousand (Eurostat, 2015), which makes the evaluation percentage from 2013 to 2014 as fourteen percent. Estonia joined the European Union in 2004 and Schengen area in 2007. In 1997 Estonia ratified the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and the corresponding 1967 protocol (UNHCR). Estonia has traditionally viewed as least attractive country for asylum seekers. According to an Estonian newspaper, it might be the case that Estonian living standard is lower than those of its neighboring countries (Marian 2015). Estonian Human rights center in their report on refugees addressed that the number of asylum seekers has been quite low and it might be the case that general public is not aware of this issue and unfortunately this topic has not been a priority on the governmental level either (EHRC 2015). In this report, Estonian Human rights center actually used their data up to the year 2011. In 2009 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 40 and in 2011 it was 67. Most recent data from Eurostat though represents a very significant story, as of 2013 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 95 and in 2014 it went high up to 155 and the evaluation rate is 63 percent which is even higher than overall EU rate. It's a significant number for a country which has only 1.3 million populations. Therefore, Estonia as a global society and a part of European Union and its organizations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees might face new challenges.

The research question and fieldwork for this study came out of a curiosity to study the resettlement experiences of South Asian refugees living in Estonia, which doesn't have sizeable multiethnicrefugee population that are found in other European Union countries, despite the fact of very fast growing number of refugees that paced up in the recent years. From a socio-cultural point of view, South Asian refugees in this study comprised of Afghan, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, who share same religion and in most cases language wise they understand each other as languages are somewhat similar and most of them know Hindi, which is widely spoken and understood in that region. This study was carried out to construct an understanding of the integration and settlement process of South Asian Refugees

living in Estonia, to focus on social and cultural aspect in a new society, and to see the impacts of resettlement on refuges. The intention was to generate new ideas of experiences on social and cultural challenges in a new society. To see the experiences of refugee's resettlement, concept of agency and structure has been utilized from a sociological point of view asking the question of how South Asian refugees cope their life in Estonia where the host society's norms and values are different from them. This research tried to find out the answers of these questions on 15 in-depth qualitative interviewswith South Asian refugees living in Estonia.

Theoretical standpoint

The question of adaptation has produced different sort of theoretical perspectives. For instance Zubrycki, in Richmond(1988) identified six models of migration. Classical approach focused on assimilation and was functionalist in orientation. It contrasted with a Marxian, or conflict model which emphasized class difference between immigrants and indigenous populations. In the early time, the colonial situations produced the elite form of migration; on the other hand in the recent times it has been cross sectional in terms of professional status and diverse in the form of cultural aspect. Recent approaches focused on the phenomenon of stratification and segmentation of labor market (Richmond 1988).

One of the core issues of the refugee movements is the relationship between economic and political determinants of population movement. Theories that we tend to get largely applicable to movements of people from poorer to richer areas, form regions of economic underdevelopment to those experiencing growth. The de jure definition of refugee status used and adopted by various countries in determining eligibility for admission (well founded fear of persecution), it is no longer possible to treat refugee movements as completely independent of the state of the global perspective economy. International relations and ideological considerations are also involved (Weiner 1990). If we look at the large movements of refugees' in current days, they not only include economic but also social and political factors and these cases are interdependent.

Theories of migration have tended to go around structure and agency. Some approach lean towards a more determinist position and plan in regards towards decision and behaviors of individual actors. While many go to the other direction

and focus on agency of individuals. Some head towards a middle ground recognizing the importance of finding the balance between structure and agency (Bakewell 2010). However, the relationship between structural constraints and individual choice is a central problem in sociological theories. It involves fundamental questions of free will and agency over or against theories which imply behavioral determination by forces over which we have little or no control.

In this study I have explored the theoretical concepts of structure and agency expounded by Anthony Giddens (1984), "it provided the framework for thinking these issues and bringing together Political (Individual, agentic) and sociological (structural, societal)aspect (Nourpannah 2014). Gidden's theory of stracturation proposes an elegant compromise as he argues that structure has a dual nature as both the medium and the outcome of the social practices they recursively organize(Bakewell 2010). It provides the tools to examine the interaction of the individual within the social fabric and 'the theoretical grounding for the "encountering" and "routinization" that form a basis for this fabric" (Nourpannah 2014: 58). To see how the encountering and routinization occurs within the South Asian Refugees in Estonia, interview questions were developed in way to concretize it; how their time being spent? Who do they look around and meet? What are their current practices being refugee when it comes to social and cultural aspect and how they interpret and perceive of received practices assuming that respondents havecommon and uniform social and cultural practices and "indeed for all Muslims" (Moghissi, Rahnema, and Goodman 2009).

Literature Review

Refugee resettlement is a notion that provides both protection and durable solutions for individuals. Refugees are often considered alongside other migrants when their situations are different (Joly 1996). Many refugees would have preferred to stay in their home country that might even lead to restrict assimilation. Scholarly works that discuss on resettlement uses different terminology that includes: acculturation, biculturalism, multiculturalism, assimilation, integration, settlement etc.

Estonian national integration policy is based on Estonian integration strategy 2008-2013, which aims to support the feeling of belonging to Estonian Society among residents of Estonia (Saar 2009), it should come through sharing common values

and command of the state language. Factors that characterize integration can be divided into two parts, structural and subjective factors. Structural factors deals with legal status, labor market etc and subjective factors deal with attitudes, for example sense of homeland, attitude towards cultural diversity, distress about perceived life style of ethnic groups in Estonia (30). Saar(2009) in her study pointed out that over the years in Estonia there has been a relatively stable general positive attitude towards cultural diversity and in this study she shown that most of the Estonians and Non Estonians agree that ethnic groups can have good relations in one country and different languages and cultures enrich society. However, this was a study to show how Estonian and Non Estonian feels on cultural diversity but did not have any particular focus on refugees as Refugees are often considered alongside other migrants when their situations are different (Joly 1996).

Research on immigrants in Estonia mostly focused on Russian speaking first or second generation immigrants putting the emphasize on Educational level of immigrants population, position of native and immigrants population in the labor market, working life of native and immigrant population, ethnic minority and majority unions, political and civic participation of immigrants etc. To examine the relationship between structural, cultural, social and identificational integration dimensions among second generation Russians in Estonia, Nimmerfeldt(2011) and his colleagues identified that in Estonia, relationship between structural and cultural integration is positive and according to this study higher level of social and identificational integration is not related to higher level of structural integration. Second generation Russian retains a strong ethnic identity and socializes primarily with other Russians. Ham and Tammaru(2011) in their research on ethnic minority and majority unions in Estonia came out with a finding that Russian speaking immigrant women are less likely to make a union which according to them is ultimate evidence of the integration of ethnic minorities into the host societies. In a study of political and civic participation of second generation Russian and Estonian Youth, Schulze(2014) pointed out that "Ethnicity remains a significant predictor of political and civic participation. Estonians are more likely to vote in municipal elections and to participate in a voluntary association than Russian."(19). However, the percentage of individuals with low level of education is lower among immigrants than among native population (Saar 2009). Migration research in Estonian society has been mostly built on Russian speaking immigrant and immigrants on the whole. None of them particularly focused on refugees or immigrants having the ethnic background outside of Europe.

A study on South Asian Immigrants in Britishsociety, Ghuman (1997) pointed out that majority of young Asian people prefers integration and rejects assimilation, marginalization, and separation strategies. Therefore young South Asians are bilingual and bicultural. They tend to maintain both their own culture and at the same time coped with the host society's norm. They usually identify themselves as 'Indo-English' (69),despite of their preferred integration strategy, 'they continue to suffer racial abuse both in and out of school and have doubt whether they belong English society" (Ghuman 2003, 130).

In a study of preferred life partner and how south Asian immigrants perceived about it, Alexander(2013) in his research shown that when young people start to take an interest in adolescence of opposite sex, Asian parents generally disapprove of dating, particularly when their daughters get involved. "Most of the marriages in Pakistan, Bangladesh are arranged by the family and this custom is still considered by the first generations immigrants in Britain" (Robinson 2005, 187)

Key domains of integration are related to four major themes of achievement and access of employment, health, education and housing. Aspect of integration and resettlement remain divergent from the mainstream literature on 'integration'. Major phenomenon that has been dealt in the scholarly interest is mental health issues when refugees settle into new societies (Nourpannah 2014). They do not provide an in-depth argument of how cultural aspect could shock from the stressful and precarious resettlement procedures as refugees resettled from different countries to Estonia and could be associated with mental issues.

In the process of resettlement, migrants face different culture, ways of living, and in cases prejudice, previous research has shown that "homesickness and fear of persecution may continue long after migration." (Nann 1982). In a study of Bosnian Muslims families, Witmer and Culver(2001) critically reviewed the existing literature of refugee's mental health and brought out the argument that available research mostly focused on post traumatic stress disorder and very few studies addressed adaptation and resiliency.

In a study of Afghan refugees and their adaptation in Canada, Stack and Iwasaki (2009) pointed out that Afgan refugee are marginalized minority who face substantial stress in the process of adaptation. Nourpanah (2014) However in her study of the experiences of Afghan refugees who have settled in Canada pointed out that Afghan refugees build upon the structures available to them and practice

both culture. The underlying motive of how to practice both culture while developing a sense of belonging in Estonia, will be discussed in the research findings.

Methodology

15 open ended interviews were conducted withPakistani, Bangladeshiand Afghan Refugee Muslim families who have settled in Estonia over the past eight years. Interviews were conducted from February 2015 to May 2015. All interviews took place in a family setting and answering the question collectively. Prior appointments were taken and interviews took place in the interviewees place. 13 Interviews were taken in Hindi and Urdu, the languages commonly spoken and understood all over South Asia and were transcribed in English. 2 interviews were conducted in Bangla which is my native language. For the quotation, anonymity and confidentiality has been ensured throughout the study.

Qualitative method has been deployed for this study as it is suited to document refugee's experiences and to provide a space to document the voices of refugees. "Qualitative method could reveal that immigrants have distinctive histories and that they are economically, socially and politically differentiated" (Barber 2003).

Refugees are difficult to access and quite often they are call 'invisible actors' (Bond and Voutira 2007). A country like Estonia, immigrants who are from South Asia can be identified as it has very small number of immigrants from outside Europe but at the same time it is really difficult to access as authors pointed out that "perhaps they are visible and can be identified but largely inaccessible for researchers for different reasons" (283). Refugees live in Estonia are free from Institutional control and are provided support person to get settled in Estonia for the first two years of their permission as a refugee status. Once I gained access to participants through asupport person, I continue establishing rapport with the participants that proved worthy. This study was not done to research a community, it was rather a study of a set of familymembers from South Asian background refugees, and therefore I didn't have to rely on any point of entry or particularly any "snow ball sampling method to reach out a community" (DeWalt and Dewalt 2011).

Preserving the culture

As soon as I got into the homes of my participants I was struck by the fact that how culturally specific furnishing and decorations were: pictures of *kaba sarif,* a holly place for Muslims;handmade sofa covers; pictures of famous place *sahid minar,* a monumentin Bangladesh to remember the great heroes who died in the language movement; beautiful mosque's photos were hanging on the wall. Of the female participants Farjana, Rokeya, Khatun and Bushra were fully covered and were completely in veil with different kind of embroidery on top of their *Burkha,* A tent like garment worn by women that covers complete body. Laila, Abida and Raka were dressed with *Shalwar Kameez* which is a traditional dress originated in South Asian and worn by women and this dress is generally viewed as different styles and doesn't cover whole body. Abida also had*Orna* which is a small piece of garment that used to be worn to cover the middle part of the body so that female sexual organ is not exposed, which Abida explains- "I am wearing a three piece,*Shalwar, Kameez* and *Orna*. If I just only were two pieces of Shalwar and Kameez, itdoesn't look good and it exposes the body". Kulsum, Mithila and Rahima were dressed in very much casual western outfit with a simple t-shirt and jeans pant with no veils. From these small number of women respondents, what is evident is that the striking differences of their clothing, which is an ongoing issue considering the fact that how politicized on the women's clothing in religious and non religious term. Despite the fact of own preferences and own beliefs in a new society, their identity remained quite firm as 'South Asian' not only offclothing but also visual effects.

Socio-cultural domains: Marriage, Friends and Family

"Honor killing" has been a catchy word by the media, especially societies where the number of immigrants are high, a word that describes how daughters of immigrants with Muslim background coming from South Asia or Middle East being abused and at times killed by the family members for having boyfriends or not being obedient of arranged marriage. Cohen wrote on Vancouver Sun that "honor killings have been on the rise in Canada". It was off interest to see how South Asian parents have been dealing their children in Estonian culture.

Respondents in this study were very much concerned about their religious identity. All families of this study seemed to have receptive mood of their children choices and they are very much concern about the fact that they cannot just force their children in this society and at the same time their wish is to teach children the way they want them to practice their religious and cultural values and to keep that uphold. Hasan, a male respondent of this study, who is 45 year father of two daughters, pointed out that- "When I die, I will have to answer Allah, what did I do for my children. So my duty as a father is to educate them and to teach religious culture. I am doing my job. If they don't want to continue, when they are grown up; it's their choice, I will never force them." His daughter goes to swimming lesson at a local swimming pool, which could be barely seen in their home country. "Her all friends go this swimming lesson, I cannot just suppress her", says Hasan. It is an instance of integration, as it refers when there is an interest in both maintaining one's heritage culture in daily interactions and with other groups. (Berry 1997). An indication of adaptation of individual motive on received culture.

Taswar, who is a 35 year father, a devout Muslim, practices Islamic rituals very consciously so that his children learn it from him. "I and my wife always pray at home, my wife does *Hijab*, covering whole body". He hopes that his son and daughter would follow them, they are now under 5 year of age and he believes this is the time when children start learning from their parents. "I never forced my wife to wear veil and I would never force my daughter"; Taswar looks at his wife Khatun, who smiles proudly and added "it's not that all women in South Asia wear a veil, it's an individual choice".

According to Mithila, who is a house wife and looking for a job, "In south Asia a lot of girls and boys are now getting married on their own choice". She explains it as "love marriage"- A kind of marriage when husband and wife know each other before marriage but doesn't have any physical relation or living together, what she explains as "I have a love marriage", but getting marriage beyond parents consent remains strict for Mithila as she explains "I had to convince my parents, and expect my children to do that as well". Children to go free and hang out with friends over night remains strict for Mithila, 'I don't like my children to go too free'.

This generational issue doesn't seem only religious but tradition of family interest to keep it extended. "In our tradition parents live with their children, especially with son, even after when son gets married. I want to stay with my child when I get older and I hope they will look after me." Says Mithila; but at the same time she

accepts the fact that it might not be the case when children grow up as she believes in Estonia everybody gets split up after reaching 18, "if my children get married without consulting me, I can't do anything" she also adds, "it could happen to any family".

Young adult respondents seemed quite obedient of their parent's expectation, "I have Estonian friends and I enjoy with them at school" says Rokeya who is a 14 year girl. Regarding question of how she socializes with the Estonian friends in the context of bringing them at home, "I don't invite my friends to come home. If someone wants to visit, I ask my parents first" says Rokeya with a short smile while looking at her parents. She seemed quite skilled at defusing tentative family matter.

Mahmud a nine year boy who goes for Basketball learning and has got quite a few Estonian friends expressed his opinion upon being asked how he perceives about his friendship with others, "I used to visit my friends home often and their parents are really nice at me". He continues expressing his view looking at his father "I hope I would be able to invite my friends regardless their gender". The observation is as such that a boy could have a friend with a same gender but having a friend of opposite gender and bringing them at home remains strict for them. Negotiation plays a significant part in the family life as Povey(2007) in her study on Afghan refugees mentioned that "in the western countries children and parents make negotiations and concessions", therefore it doesn't remain one sided.

Maruf a 42 year respondent who is a sociology graduate proudly mentioned that "I teach both my daughter and son Qran, and they both already pray five times a day." His five year son and seven year daughter both goes to Estonian school but he did not mention it in the first place while asked about his children. Religion plays a big part of Maruf's life as he mentioned "religion is everything for me."Maintaining host societies values and at the same time keeping own religious belief and going with traditional rituals seemed acceptable for Maruf. "My wife is looking for a job here and I don't think it's bad for women to go out." For Maruf, the significant part of his social and family life is how he interprets religion and it has to be dealt in a new society. The term of sex and marriage is very much in this society what in his concept "western values" but "one has to cope with it and will have to practice own values accordingly" says Maruf. In some circumstances dual life in a context to live within a family and of social life remains significant for refugees, as

Povey(2007) identified that sometimes concession and negotiations within a refugee family life could lead double lives.

Asad, a recently married man informed during a discussion period that the notion of family honor among the south Asians in Estonia is relatively fewer, he thinks it is because "the number of South Asian immigrants are few" something what he thinks that "if the community is big, notion of family honor and prestige becomes bigger." Boys don't seem as much affected as the girls are in terms of religious and traditional notions, as Asad says "religious affinities and traditional aspects have positive correlation with the girls in the community."

The willingness of female education and the issue of sending them school and working outside the family is a significant indicator of the cultural adaptation of South Asian families in Estonia. Female education has been highly politicized in south Asia, while women's right remains in controversy and women's role in the kitchen and household being emphasized for the "physical and social well being of household members" (Hole 2005: 146). Rahima a 19 year girl sitting beside her parents, without any hesitation says "My plan is to finish my education first; I want to be an architect. I don't have any plans to get married now". This is not just an indicator of the second generation's willingness of education but also stepping away from the cultural boundaries being refugees and pushing them into an open window. They no longer belong to a society where only the male counterpart would make the ultimate decision on women. Even though parents do have their preferences as per their children's choices as it could be evident in any societies but this doesn't prevent them to think and to do what they want. 'I know what my parents want, but at the end of the day it's my life' says Rahima.

Between generations in this study, parents and their children and their understanding in regards to religious norms and cultural traditions seemed a reciprocal understanding and it can be brought up as mutual understanding and can be argued as tolerant accommodation within the family. Parents and children's have respect for each other as parents have their own preferences but they do believe that at certain point it's the children's own decision and on the other hand children's tend to understand the overall appeal and very much sensible of their values. As they adapt with the fact of friends not being allowed at home, makingthe statement by parents that they are not being forced rather of a mutual understanding and at the same time they admit that they are free to chose their academic studies and when they grow up they would decide what they want to do

in their career. Overall, these both ways interaction had a form of unique South Asian feelings and at the same time Estonian essence is present in thinking process.

Islam as mere religion and religion as custom

Immigrants from different background might have different opinions and attitudes of relating to Islam as cultural, social, political and religious system (Sharmin 2008) and this is evident from this research participants. Out of fifteen families, ten were verbally and visibly religious than others and it was evident from discussion sessions. "For me religion is everything. Whatever I eat, whatever I do; I try to do it in terms of religion" says Asad while looking at his wife who is completely covered by veil. Social aspect has been emphasized by Tastsoglou(2006) mentioning "religion could ease social integration of migrants" (220). Even though, going to the Friday prayer is not necessary but it is significant in social and political values and gives them social integration. "I always send my five year son to the Friday prayer with his father so that he could get to know others" says Asad's wife. It seemed, has spiritual aspect in it and at the same time cultural and the political aspect, "if I don't take my son with me to the Friday prayers, other community members might think that I don't want to raise my son with proper religious and cultural education" says Asad.

Islam(2008) Emphasized on how individual interpretation is significant in terms of religious practice. Dossa(2008) pointed out how religion could help individuals to organize their time and space. It was evident in this study aspracticing Islam helps them to adapt the uncertainties in new societies and face the challenges. Quite often they are worried about the next generation, whether they would keep up their culture which they believe based on religion, "I wear *Burkha*and I pray five times in a day, it gives me pleasure and I hope my children would learn it from me" says Laila. For her whateverhappens, happens for the best, "I am satisfied with whatever Allah has provided me in my life" as Marf uses the word *"Alhamdulillah"* which is an Arabic word used to express thankful to god.

Religious identity does not appear core point for other families. Conviction on religion seemed quit reluctant, Friday prayers doesn't seem too important for them. "I go to eid(religious festival) prayers twice in a year but that's all" says Hamid, a young newly married man. For him, this is the way he was brought up and religion

doesn't play a part in his social and cultural life. "I got information from a web site that Estonia is number one, in terms of not having religious influence on social, political life, I am a part of this society now and I would love to follow it" says Hamid.

Dressed up with full *hijab*, fully covered dress appeared just a matter of "used to" for Sahana 35 year old woman. "I feel comfortable with hijab this is the way I am used to", religion is not so important, she advanced pointing out that "I have to learn Estonian language, will have to get some training from this society to get a good job rather than focusing on religion." These families food habits seemed south Asian flavors which they incorporated with more of a custom which is an integral part of their life than religion.

One family appeared non-religious. The female appeared in western outfit and there was no religious symbol in the house or any ornaments worn by anybody. It has be to be mentioned that for a family coming from that part of the world where religion plays significant role in public and private sphere, stepping forward and stating as non religious family has a social significance. A woman appearing with western outfit and making points of what she likes or dislikes is quite a statement as (Nourpannah 2014) stated that "assuming a non-religious identity for people from countries where religion plays a part into their constitution can be seen as agentic."(64). for this family, not all people in South Asia are religious. It's just the political parties who are making the profit in it. "As most people in South Asia are uneducated and poor, political parties are making full advantage using religion into politics" says Anufa. When the question was directed on adaptation and culture, Anufa's husband says "I am willing to accept anything that comes across and I feel will be good for me and my family".

Thus, Individuals affiliations on religion in this study have been in different degrees and it's a construction for individuals, which seemed agentic by which they at times show their identity, willingness and compassionateness. On the other hand individuals focused on their individuality by contrasting to other stating what they think of religion and how insignificant it is for them.

Conclusion

Gidden's term appeared strong in impression through the participants of this study. They are selective of what they adapt in their cultural and social life and regarded

as highly "south Asian" and extend their desire to adapt Estonian culture to a certain extent what they believe will be significant for them. They admit what they have gone through being refugee and for existence they need to cope with different anticipation in a new society.

Refugee families and reconstruction of their lives of individual preferences and differences of thinking level have been evident through this study that emphasizes heterogeneity of relatively homogenous participants which is meaningful through their daily life and practices. Whatever structures they carried in the form of religion and available to them in the form or education and decision making in a new society; they build it up and practice their agency through that to make their structure.

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Summary

A study of South Asian Refugee's Settlement Experiences in Estonia

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This paper presents the experiences of South Asian refugees in Estonia and their subsequent settlement procedure by using Anthony Giddens's concept of Structure and Agency. Investigation was carried out by a qualitative approach with a sample of South Asian refugees who have settled in Estonia. Focus was to address how respondents express their agency within a given structure of a new society. In light of the outcomes, individual preferences and differences of thinking level was evident and it is argued that they form heterogeneous presence in contrast to what they are being portrayed of mere victims or sufferers by general understanding.

Keywords: Refugee, structure, agency, South Asia, Islam, settlement, Estonia

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Identity practice: A study of Bangladeshi Immigrants Leisure Subculture and Identity Practices in Tallinn, Estonia

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Introduction

Bangladeshi immigrant social gatherings for the game of cricket have been around in Tallinn for more than five years. In 2011, some four or five people started playing Cricket in their neighborhood during the spring and summer time on Friday, Saturday or weekend basis and on any Estonian or even Bangladeshi national holidays or festival events. They continued this event and later on a number of Bangladeshi immigrants in and around Tallinn started attending this event. There was very little number of Bangladeshi immigrants living in Tallinn when they started, according to the respondents, it was around 20 to 25 Bangladeshi immigrants all together. There is no particular statistics about how many Bangladeshi immigrants were living in Tallinn in the year 2017. According to the respondents it is around 200. On a Sunday afternoon in April 2017, I, a Bangladeshi man, a doctoral student at Tallinn University followed a friend into the immigrant social gathering for cricket game; expectation was to get some people to interview for my project on Bangladeshi immigrants in Estonia. It was fascinating to get involved with immigrant's leisure subculture and work for more than two months on it. I figured that the game of cricket in a very exclusive way exposed the emotional, cultural and social repercussion of migration for those who are new in Estonia.

Ethnicity and Leisure time

The number of "Other Background" immigrants in Estonia consists of 0.8 percent of entire population, which in number is 10,912, that includes Oceania/South Asian/South American and Middle Eastern Immigrants (Statistics Estonia, 2017). This ethnography in my opinion would be the first study and sociological investigation among the group of immigrants, who are from Bangladesh. This paper aims to investigate two questions: In a leisure subculture, what do

Bangladeshi immigrants do and our understanding about different immigrant leisure subculture. This investigation specifically would try to investigate our understanding of status practices and identity issues in the immigrant cricket game ground.

Studies that focused on immigrant leisure time, many of them take their departure point by emphasizing on the separation of immigrant leisure space from the mass population or host countries population as a reaction to constraints that includes cultural and social differences and isolation, less knowledge about host society and their language skills (Stoldolska, 1998; Rublee & Shaw, 1991). The constraints that have been focused in earlier studies some of them are caused by perceived discrimination. It is evident by many studies that people with different ethnic background with different phenotypes, faced discriminatory attitude in their leisure venue that are public in places, and ethnic minorities retreat those leisure exercise to avert discrimination (Chavez 1991, 1993 cited in Stoldolska & Jackson, 1998). Different studies figured that interacting or socializing with other ethnics comes in to the form of reaction to discrimination, in other cultural and social platforms, work place for instance (Pankiw & Bienvenue, 1990; Li, 1987; Feagin, 1991). A study on Polish immigrants in Alberta, Canada, Stoldoska and Jackson (1998) found out that because of many immigrants faced perceived discrimination in their daily life, they come up with their leisure decisions which offered options for recuperation from discrimination at school or work place.

Formation of ethnic identity and solidarity has been emphasized as immigrant leisure culture in traditional immigrant community studies. In an investigation on Italian immigrants in Chicago, America, Poe (2001) stated that food making was a point that turned Italian immigrants to consolidate their different regional identities in unique Italian American identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They came from different regions of Italy, had different customs or rituals but their eating turned a focus for mutual memory and that leads ethnic identity construction. In the twentieth century, Immigrant saloon for instance created single ethnic group (Noel, 1977; Kingsdale, 1973). Saloon at times was used to conserve ethnic customs. This place was used as a place for meetings and also to celebrate festivals related to origin country. In an investigation on Mexican immigrants in America Alarcon, Durand and Gonzalez (1987) pointed out that frequent contact can be prompted by variety of Institutional mechanism that reinforces their ethnic networks. In this research they figured how a soccer clubs bring immigrants together that too, on a regular basis that bring information and exchange among them.

Research on immigrants in Estonia mostly focused on Russian speaking first or second generation immigrants putting the emphasize on educational level of immigrant's population, position of native and immigrant's population in the labor market, working life of native and immigrant population, ethnic minority and majority unions, political and civic participation of immigrants etc. To examine the relationship between structural, cultural, social and identificational integration dimensions among second generation Russians in Estonia, Nimmerfeldt (2011) and his colleagues identified that in Estonia, relationship between structural and cultural integration is positive and according to this study higher level of social and identificational integration is not related to higher level of structural integration. Second generation Russian retains a strong ethnic identity and socializes primarily with other Russians. Ham and Tammaru (2003) in their research on ethnic minority and majority unions in Estonia came out with a finding that Russian speaking immigrant women are less likely to make a union which according to them is ultimate evidence of the integration of ethnic minorities into the host societies. In a study of political and civic participation of second generation Russian and Estonian Youth, Schulze (2014) pointed out that 'Ethnicity remains a significant predictor of political and civic participation. Estonians are more likely to vote in municipal elections and to participate in a voluntary association than Russian' (p.19). However, the percentage of individuals with low level of education is lower among immigrants than among native population (Saar, 2009). Migration research in Estonian society has been mostly built on Russian speaking immigrant and immigrants on the whole. None of them particularly focused on refugees or immigrants having the ethnic background outside of Europe.

This paper, by investigating Bangladeshi Immigrants Cricket game practices, argues that Leisure subculture for the immigrants is in the first place a combine or collective counter to problems incurred in migration process. In case of Bangladeshi immigrants playing cricket game subculture, the cricket ground was place where immigrants not only retrieve or develop their ethnic identity or networks, but they also achieve their personal or individual identity and recover their status damaged in the process of migration.

Data and Method

Two months' participant observation was carried out for this ethnography and in-depth interviews with multiple participants in the Bangladeshi immigrant's social gathering for cricket sport. From April to May 2017, I tried to attend on a regular basis in any kind of parties before and after the gathering for the cricket game. I

tried to establish friendly and personal relationship with organizers who organized this event and also other participants who took part the game. Those who attended the event quite often knew I was doing a research in the field. They were rather willing to provide insightful information and this way they turned a very relied sources of gossip and information. In May, I myself started attending the game, which helped me to become more associated with the participants.

Through this approach I was able to carry out open, semiformal and formal interviews with nineteen participants who I met through the field. Out of these interviewees thirteen were men and five were women, these women, however, never took part of the game but were accompanying their partner or relatives. I tried to approach in a way, while myself playing, in my team members I tried to introduce my research and to see if anyone showed any interest and was talking about these issues during the play and afterwards. This way I asked their phone number and tried to see if I could conduct interview later. Another approach was lunch gathering. Usually after the game is finished, they would be divided into several groups and would go for lunch. In the lunch table names and phone numbers have been exchanged between and among the members. In this process I tried and figured some new members to invite for a talk. Another way to approach was just to turn to the members who were playing in the field and directly inform them what I have been doing in my research and ask them if they would be interested to go for an interview. Organizers of the game were one of the very few cases I approached in this way.

Interviews have been conducted at a Pizza shop or a restaurant on a lunch table, lasted for about half or an hour. Open interviews could go even longer and at times participants invited me to go to their place and to have conversation or friendly discussion after the interview. Most of the information has been picked in this way.

Interviewees usually talked about their experiences in Estonian, their life story, expectations and the reason for participating the game of cricket. Other than interviews, I took field notes of each game gathering. I tried to take notes of what they did, what did they say and if there is anything special or unusual. I wrote the field notes during the night after the interviews based on my memory, and also some voice recording and notes that I took whenever I could during the course of interview or observation. Through grounded theory approach the data were processed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Themes were derived from open coding.

Bangladeshi Immigrants Game of Cricket gathering in Tallinn

Bangladeshi Immigrants Cricket game gathering started almost five years back as a social gathering among Bangladeshi students mostly and also some professionals and businessman. The gathering that I focused was based on a field called "Hipodrom", this is a regular gathering place, normally during the weekends and any other Bangladeshi festival days or Estonian national holidays. There is no formal advertising for this event. Through social media they get to know about it, there is a Facebook group called "Bangladeshis living in Estonia", through this platform this event was created.

Normally the game goes for around three to four hours, starting from early in the morning 9 a.m. to 12 noon or 13 p.m. This is a free event; members who regularly play cricket pay for the cricket bat and ball, which doesn't cost that much. Five euros a month is enough for that.

Outside the game field women and other men who do not play, would sit or stand together, would gossip in their own language. Some brings Bangladeshi traditional food to have them together with other community members, some do play Bangladeshi songs in their mobile while the rest would play and make fun. I noticed that even though the whole gathering was for play, but the playing part is essentially a basis through that people meet and talk and discuss about their life, expectation and what is going on around.

When the game is over, some would go directly to their home, some of them would still hang around, would go for lunch together, more often they go to Indian restaurant nearby where some of them do work as a part timer or full timer. They get special discount from the restaurant. Some of them would even go from lunch table to their home for the dinner and to make a Bangla party, where they will play Bangla music and have some fun by talking and making laugh on each other.

Some existing literature figured that social gathering can be described as segregated by class (Roy, 1997; Peiss, 1986). Bangladeshi immigrants' game gathering was mostly organized by the students but also attracted other professionals, businessman and other socioeconomic background's people and also some of them came from the southern city of Tartu. Among the participants I got university teacher, PhD students, masters and bachelor level students, IT expert, restaurant owners, house wives and some worker in different sectors. Bangladesh is large country, what I identified is that most of the immigrants of this gathering from Sylhet, Chittagong and Dhaka region.

Age wise most participants were between their early twenties and early thirties. This was partly because most of them were either students or young professionals and also the fact the cricket became popular in the 90s in Bangladesh. Therefore, younger generations grew up with cricket as their recreational opportunities, whereas earlier generation might find football or any other activities as their recreational activities.

This game of cricket also attracted for mostly the single men, even though some of their wives were present, despite the fact that they were not playing, as cricket is widely viewed as men's game in Bangladesh.

Practice of status and identification through Game gathering

This cricket game gathering was a cheap recreational activity for Bangladeshi immigrants. They attended this gathering to have some physical exercise, to have some relaxed time, to meet new people in the community and to make friendship.

Acting Bangladeshi

Most of the Bangladeshi immigrants attended the game gathering to find company from other country mate, talk in Bangla language. Game organizers made sure that the environment is rather friendly and Bangla music during the event plays its part. Being conscious as Bangladeshi played a role during the gathering. Yakub, a 25-year-old student says "cricket is a part of younger generation Bangladeshi and I come here to feel a little bit of Bangladeshiness"

Performing Bangladeshi Identity through celebration

On the 14thApril, I saw there were different Bangladeshi foods being brought out by every members of the game gathering. The turnout was quite high. It was the Bangla New Year day. They started the gathering by singing a song "*Esho he Boisakh, esho he esho*", it's a song that welcomes the Bangla New Year. There was Bangla book offered by the organizers.

I recognized that I got into a very rare nationalistic emotional event on that day. They ended up game event by holding each other's hand and singing another Bangla song *"amra korbo joy"*, we shall overcome.

In this very day, some local Estonian and other international students from different countries were invited to join with the Bangladeshi gathering. However, occasionally I could feel the antagonism towards other nationality as one member stated

"Foreigners almost ruined our event! We always had to show them how we did things in Bangladesh, in this process we could not act properly the way we normally celebrate our Bangla new year. We shouldn't have invited them in this day. They could come to any other weekend, if they wanted so. Organizers should think about it"

Sense of togetherness

A very typical statement that came out from the participants is that 'Bangladeshi people feel and act naturally when they are with other Bangladeshis." During the game event they chant, sought each other both in and out of the field shows empathy and understanding among them. A sense of togetherness was there. Rokon, a 33-year university teacher, explained the sense of collectivity *'In the game gathering you could talk with other people. I have the feeling that I belong to this group. Whenever I get into this gathering and someone greets me with the Bangla greeting, I feel like here I am with my group"*

One participant whose wife was Estonian and most of her friends are from Estonia, when he speaks very little Estonian, he stated – "*I feel kind of fellowship here in this gathering. You would find some friend to talk and go eating and drinking together."* Some others who were married to local Estonian said that they found this gathering most social event for them and that they had some social freedom in this gathering. This was a gathering that goes beyond the game for them.

Status practices through grouping at the social game gathering

For many participants this game gathering was where their socializing started. After the game, they would divide into groups for different find of activities. More often they would go to lunch. Some would gather on a Saturday evening at their home. Some would go for some cultural activities. These groups had their self-consciousness among them, and each group might have some core member followed by some peripheral members. The bases of the groups were built by their socioeconomic status, educational background, region and any particular interests. Self-identification has been reflected through this grouping. However, this

grouping was rather fluid in boundary and that moving in and out was a constant matter.

Region wise Grouping

Bangladesh has different regional division and each division has its own dialect and culture. Usually whenever they meet with a new person in a social gathering the immediate question would be "*which part of Bangladesh you come from?"* The feasible groups that were identified was "Sylheti" and "Chittagong". One is Southeastern part of Bangladesh and the other is Southern part. As Sylheti people do have the tendency to go abroad, so they formed the highest in number even in Estonia as well, followed by Chittagong.

People from Sylhet do believe that they have specific life style and they might pose different personality than other parts of Bangladesh. This way of thinking was evident among the participants and also this feeling made them into a bonding. I was invited to a Sylheti gathering where more than fifteen people were present. As soon as I got into that gathering, I was asked *"Which part of Sylhet I was from*"? During this gathering, people were talking about their home town. Some also found that they had some mutual relatives or friends back in Bangladesh. I saw a food that was served with 'Satkora' this is kind of a special spice can be found that in that particular region in Bangladeshi and it holds very significant as their regional identity. Everybody was delighted in that lunch table finding 'Satkora' in their menu.

Interestingly, where Southeast part harmony was feeling in same qualities, Southern parts were more of not being able to get the same privilege by other group or being discriminated or feeling of less in number. As one guy from Southern part stated that

"*I tried to hang around the Southeastern people initially, but none was good enough to hang. Now I only hang with people from Southern part. When you are with your hometown people, you can share everything they don't laugh on it, they try to understand and help you to solve the problem"*

Those who had no education or less educated had strong regional bonding than those who were educated. It means those could not find any other stigma found it easier to form a group this way.

Role of Education or Occupation to form group

While I asked One Sylheti, who has been doing PhD, *"why did not you socialize yourself with other Sylheti?* Said, '*Level is different*". "*Level"* is the word, which I heard constantly from Bangladeshi immigrants. Educated people with better socioeconomic positions found themselves in a different group. A group that I participated was consisted by PhD and Masters Students. One 27-year-old lady, who was doing her PhD, stated that *'I found other groups not suitable for me and too crowdie"*

It was the same for people who had low socioeconomic and educationally back groups. That PhD student informed,

'*I invited one girl who I met at the game gathering to one of our lunch gatherings, I found she was embarrassed and other group members kept on asking where she went to school and was graduated, she was never graduated, so she found it embarrassing. People were anyway polite while asking though but yet she did not find it good".*

Grouping by activities and Interests

Some participants who met each other during game gathering formed smaller groups. I found one group who like cooking formed a smaller group of three or four men and women. I found another who formed group who had partners from local society or from other country than Bangladesh. I was invited to a gathering as such, one 40-year-old guy said "*we are fixed circle because we are married and also, we had partners from different societies than Bangladesh. We can share and count us activates and feel good at it".*

Performing personal or individual status in the social gathering

In a predominantly Estonian society; Bangladeshi immigrants are first seen as Bangladeshi or as immigrants. In this social gathering, in contrast, people were able to show their different statuses and to distinguish themselves among their community. This status could be achieved through their residential status, education, occupation, marital situation, even skills in play in the field. Status display and resources display was quite evident in this kind of social gathering.

Displays of socioeconomic status were also very much evident in this particular gathering. While owning a car would be nothing in Estonian culture, it becomes quite a status symbol for this kind of Bangladeshi gathering. Especially after the gathering, when people seek a lift to go home, the car owner becomes quite important, and also it shows the fact that he is quite settled within this host society. Women who were not playing, but were accompanying male partners, were also displaying status by talking about the costs of their ornaments or brand-name clothes.

Figuring identity and status practices through leisure subculture

Question can be asked which way we can understand immigrant leisure subculture through this identity and status practices? In my opinion this kind of Bangladeshi immigrant subculture is indeed a retreat for them as immigrants do have barriers and that perceived discrimination is quite often a case as well. It was evident through this social gathering that they practice a collective identity but at the same time I would argue that a person could even recover individual identities and status through kind of leisure social gathering.

It is quite evident from the narratives and practices by the Bangladeshi immigrants that this kind of social leisure gathering helped them escaping from social isolation and the stressful life that they lead. This is where they could talk in their own language, find each other company, and could perform different identity and social status from within the community.

Sense of Collective (identity) and Individual (status)

While Bangladeshi immigrants gathered in a field for cricket game, it gave them a collective identity and also it leads another question whether they were only constructing collective identity, or they were constructing their individual status and identity? In the Bangladeshi immigrant's subculture setting I would argue that yes it was in the first place for collective identity, but it also in a contrast view formed individual identity in many ways. Number of Bangladeshi respondents came to join this kind of gathering to enjoy the recognition their individual status they would not find out side of this community.

For example, Hamid, a 30-year-old refugee, who is well educated and has a PhD in Mathematics found a new status through PhD students gathering, what he came to know from the game gathering. He stated that,

"I was just a refugee for others, before I found this group or small community. When I got to know this kind of PhD students gathering and their discussion topics, I got along nicely with them; and this way retrieve my own status and identify. Now I am no longer a refugee for my community members".

To get the sense of individual status and to recover it by using immigrant's ethnic leisure subculture, we can see if from the subculture theory's analyses which emphasize on the status problems. Cohen (1997) stated that *"status problems are problems of achieving respect in the eyes of one's fellows"* When a people or group of people do not get the recognition , they form small group that redefine them and make them more focus and give them status and identities through this kind of practices; Kim (1997) in his research shown that Koreans who were residing in New York were gathering in Korean church which provided middle class Korean to come together and share their mobility among themselves.

To sum up, I would argue that Bangladeshi immigrant's social Cricket Game gathering was more than collective or group solidarity, it facilitated individuals to get recognition through collective national identity building and group solidarity. However, there should not be a contraction that some of the participants did participate the gathering from national feeling or sense of belonging and be proud Bangladeshi. This however for many participants was the primary cause or attraction and through that groups or individual's identification can be achieved.

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to address Bangladeshi Social Game gathering in Tallinn, a leisure subculture among the Bangladeshi immigrants in Tallinn, Estonia. Identity and status practices have been described through this paper and how it is being implemented through practices. I tried to draw conclusion that leisure subculture is very important for the immigrants where they could get out of the stressful life that they live, considering the fact that migration for many people could be traumatic fact. As Pertes and Rumbaut (1996) pointed out that *"we should not only think what makes people ill but also what keeps people healthy*. Bangladeshi Social gathering from a game was a place where they not only practiced collective identity, they could feel the sense of belonging, also it provides a space to adapt individual strategies to perform and gain identity though that practices. This paper also gives an important indication that through observation and ethnography one can study this group of people and its insight though leisure sub cultural practices.

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Summary

Identity practice: A study of Bangladeshi Immigrants Leisure Subculture and Identity Practices in Tallinn, Estonia.

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This paper addressed Game gathering in Tallinn, Estonia from the perspective of leisure subculture among Bangladeshi immigrants. By describing Identity and status practices, this paper figured how it is implemented through their leisure practices. This study also addressed the fact that leisure subculture is very important for the immigrants in order to get out of their stressful life as for many of them migration itself can be traumatic fact. Through ethnography this paper came up with the conclusion that leisure subculture provides a social cohesion which leads the immigrants to practice their different identity and status from within the community. This paper also argues that apart from collective identify, this kind of leisure subculture gathering gives recognition of an individual's identity and status. Social gathering in the form of playing game of cricket was a place where the Bangladeshi immigrants not only practiced collective identity, they could feel the sense of belonging, also it provides a space to adapt individual strategies to perform and gain identity though that practices.

Keywords: Subculture, Immigrants, Tallinn, Estonia, Identity, Refugee.

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Untold Stories: A Study of Sudanese and Syrian Refugees in Estonia

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Untold Stories: A Study of Sudanese and Syrian Refugees in Estonia

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the coping resources and the present and past experiences of two groups with refugee experiences in Estonia through narrative approach. Avert narratives, Struggling narratives, Instantaneous narratives, Boundary narratives, and Re-occurrence narratives identified through the interviews with 12 refugees. Differences between this two groups and individual accounts were also identified. The structure of the narratives, identity construction while in exile and coping mechanism through the narratives shaped their life stories and lives in exile. One significant outcome of this study is the lack of compatibility of the stories between two groups, through which five narratives established to elaborate the variety of their accounts.

Keywords: refugee, Estonia, narrative, memory, story

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Historias No Contadas: Estudio de Refugiados Sirios y Sudaneses en Estonia

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Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue explorar los recursos de afrontamiento y las experiencias presentes y pasadas de dos grupos con experiencias de refugiados en Estonia a través del enfoque narrativo. Las narrativas de evitación, las narrativas de lucha, las narrativas instantáneas, las narrativas de límites y las narrativas de reaparición identificadas a través de las entrevistas a doce refugiados. También se identificaron las diferencias entre estos dos grupos y los testimonios individuales. La estructura de las narrativas, la construcción de la identidad en el exilio y el mecanismo de afrontamiento a través de las narraciones moldearon sus historias de vida y sus vidas en el exilio. Un resultado significativo de este estudio es la falta de compatibilidad de las historias entre dos grupos, a través de las cuales se establecieron cinco narrativas para elaborar la variedad de sus relatos.

Palabras clave: refugiados, Estonia, narrativa, memoria, historia

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According to Teski and Climo (1995) storytelling belongs to those activities that makes us human. Told stories often become the sources to define who we are, our identity, ourselves and the changes that occur over a period of time. How we construct our identity is complex phenomenon and never happens in isolation, but it is a process which can be called interactive and directed towards the stories told by the participants for a large audience (Goffman, 2002). It does not mean that people's identities are not authentic, rather it gives the plural and vocal nature of identity which has influence of the individual's or the narrator's past, present and future through their social, cultural, historical, family or political aspects (Feuchtwang, 2003).

Riessman in the year 2008 in his study of refugee stories stated that when people tell their stories of their lives, they actually live with those stories what they tell. Any disruptions of life, which leads separation from family members and be associated with force migration and then the ultimate result is the loss of country and home. To cope with the new environments and to reconstruct identity, stories that the refugees hold and to give them the space of telling that could assist them in creating new identities in terms of home and host society and culture and to gain control of their new lives in a foreign land (Leydesdorff , 2000; Frank, 2010).

However, many studies on the other hand pointed out that traumatic experiences could interfere memories, which could lead the refugees preventing to associate memories, which could make them unable to adapt new experiences (Keyes & Kane, 2004; Obrist & Buchi, 2008; Weingarten, 2003). Stories related to traumatic memories are not pleasant and sometimes people try to suppress these unpleasant memories, their thoughts and actions related to traumatic experiences (Herman, 2001) and if they share their experiences negatively and it makes effect to their identity or their any well-being, then to avoid or suppress their stories gets validated (Anderson et al., 2010). However, Herman (2001) pointed out that retelling and revising stories help people to organize and integrate their fragmented experiences or memories, which could create new coherent narratives and ultimate helps to get rid of post-traumatic experiences. This way, people could select their past as memory which is very dynamic in everybody's mind, filter them and then restructure them in terms of present situation and future needs. This

process also creates an environment to create counter narratives to heal them from the experiences, at the same time keeping the values of their self and family. Counter narrative can be defined in a way which challenges the dominant view of a given society, as often refugees are viewed as traumatized people and can be burden for the society (Herman, 2001).

Memory and Narrative

Participants memory plays important role to build narratives (Halbwachs, 1980). It is often considered that memories reflect one's self reflection, but also has social aspects in it (Bneezer, 2002). It is often highlighted that refugees should forget their past to be able to cope with their new societies, hence instead of past memories, it is expected that refugees should focus on the new memories (Teski & Climo, 1995). In this regard it is important for researchers and social scientists to pay attention to memories that are not being heard. If untold memories are acknowledged, researchers would be able to come up with new ideas to address refugee issues (Feuchtwang, 2003).

Language play significant role in sharing memories, through which their past images comes into social construction (Leydesdorff, 2000). The link between language and memories has been emphasized by the researchers (Alexander, 1995) to reflect refugee lives. Metaphors that come through language reflects their stories and play important role to illustrate refugees daily life (Burner, 1987). Self identity can be recognized through shared language and thoughts (Linde, 1987)

It is believed that cultural symbols can be addressed through shared language and narratives through which refugee's past and present can be analyzed (Cavarero, 2000). Often told narratives expressed by an individual is viewed as complete personal aspect but the path it came through, the sense of vibration it creates, the language being used gives us the cultural narratives of which any individual is exposed (Bneezer, 2002).

Social class can also be found and analyzed by the narratives told by the participants (Tonkin, 1992) and it usually depends on the selections of the plots and themes and which way we want to recall their lives and memories. George Steinmetz (1992) for instance stated that themes that are the creation

of told stories through language are actually the reflection of culture, gender or race. To be able to acknowledge their sense of identity, told narratives play vital role and is significant to know the any society where we live. (Dawson, 1994) It is not that all the told stories help to understand the culture but the sequential path that it follows and its life cycle gives us the plot to understand it (Andrews, 2004). Tonkin (1992) in a study on Jlao community in Liberia stated that same stories can have several meanings, therefore it is important to understand the plot to be able to illustrate the complete situation. Gleason (1983) stated that our self-hood is a reflection of the society where we belong and its values. Our memory this way becomes the major source of our identity and then the changes that we make in our life are the the narratives from within a story being told.

Migration and Memory

Sense of belonging and the space they belong is very significant for migrants and it comes from the memory that they carry and their imagination (Constance, 2004). For transnational families, narratives play vital role to form their identity (Appadurai, 1996), which can reflect how they adapt in a new society. In a study on Christian refugees, Bryceson and Vuroela (2002) figured how gender and status of migrant can play different role in sharing memories. The role of male and female can also be changed in a different context as Thompson and Bauer (2005) pointed out that the role of a migrant father was changed in a different country context and was explained completely different way while telling stories.

Family dynamics can be presented through oral stories. In a study on African Caribbean families, Constance (2004) pointed out that family reunion and constant communication with family members back home is significant for migrant families which provide them the sense of belonging and also identity practice. It is often viewed that knowing family is knowing themselves and shared memories play a significant part in it. Shared life stories provide an individual to express the sense of emotion which in turn could help in adapting a new society (Nussbaum, 2001).

Context of Estonia

Estonia recently transformed from a refugee producing country to a refugee hosting country (Tammaru et al., 2010). The number of applicants started to increase in the year 2010 but reached at its peak in the year 2015, when the number of asylum seekers were 230. However, by the end of 2018, there were 322 refugees living in Estonian (UNHCR, 2018). Estonia also agreed to accept quota refugees as part of European relocation program and these refugees are from Non- European ethnic background. Islam (2016) in his study on Estonian refugees, pointed out that there is no significant academic research on existing refugees from outside Europe, Estonia will start to receive quota refugees from non-European ethnic background. Therefore, academics and researchers need to address this issue to integrate these refugees into the host society.

Aim of This Study

Any groups or community in a society, which are marginalized need to have adequate space, so they can tell their stories at a pace which can be conducive for them. Researchers duty is to move beyond the words and to extract the silences and blank untold stories (Sorsoli, 2010). To explore silences and untold stories, unstructured life story method is suitable for the researchers, as it allows bringing out the counter narratives through long conversations, which allows the narrators to reveal their stories (Ward, 2003).

Spector-Mersel (2011) proposed a narrative interpretive model to find out the identity of the narrators and according to him it can be revealed by the Narratives end point (EP), researchers need to attend or focus on what is added in the stories and what is excluded. To be able to come up with the end point (EP), one needs to take the silences (what is excluded), omissions (were irrelevant), and flattening (were told but not elaborated) into account to reconstruct identity, which can be suitable for themselves.

By studying specific settings, this study aimed to explore the coping resources and the present and past experiences of two groups with refugee experiences in Estonia through narrative approach.

Methodology

Participants

Participants having refugee status were from Syria (seven) and Sudan (five) and they are living in Estonia. Among the participants, eight were men and four women aged between 21 and 57 years. Participants from Sudan's average age was 34 and Syrian participant's average was 36 years. There was not any feasible difference between these participants on the basis of age or how many years they are in Estonia. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, their individual particularities will not be provided.

To gain the access of the participants, contact was established with the support person, who provides various support to resettle refugees in Estonia. Once the contact was made, some participants referred their friends who they believed will be willing to share their stories.

Participants were well-informed about the research the perspectives of this study. Participants gave the consent to audio-taping. However, as this study was carried out in a refugee center, according to the center's rules and regulations, I was not allowed to carry any audio-taping out of the center. So, I had to transcribe the data before I left the center. Participants from Sudan was more heterogeneous, in terms of religion and education, two of them had university degree and three of them are Christian and two Muslim, whereas participants from Syria are all Muslim and there were no one who had university degree. However, all participants were educated and had good level of English, when it comes to communicate.

Data collection

Open ended face to face interviews were carried out between December 2016 and March 2017 at Vao Keskus. This is the place where asylum seekers and refugees are placed in Estonia. However, they were asked to choose their preferred venue, so they feel comfort to express their stories, and they preferred to have it where they live. Interviews were mostly done in about one hour to three hours session. Their life stories were collected through unstructured interviews, starting with an opening statement and then

follow up questions for clarifications to enhance understanding. All interviews begun with the statement: *Please tell me your life story in your way. You can start with your life back your home country and then continue your stories as your journey continued till Estonia, your first experiences in Estonia and the later time and what you frame for future life.*

Data Analysis

To analyze the stories, a case-centered narrative approach was used (Riessman, 2008). Interviews were transcribed and checked carefully. Next step was to describe interviews thematically, this way a structural element of narratives identified to get the main points of the stories and overall context of the study-who, when and where; to evaluate the emotional perspectives of the narrator (Labov, 2008) The aim of the analysis was to present the holistic interpretation of each told story which included individual, socio-cultural, interpersonal influences (Josselson, 2011). Any ambiguities that arose of this study were discussed with the participants. However, respondents' names and any aspects that might reveal their circumstances were omitted to preserve their confidentiality.

Analysis

Participants of this study were asked to tell their story in their words to feel comfort while sharing. Participants from Sudan explained their stories in an order and stories were equally distributed while described their life in Sudan and then exile time to Estonia. Their stories contained powerful feelings and clear image of their events and experiences that they have gone through in different stages. Stories from Syrian refugees on the other hand were not told systematically when it came to share their stories in their country of origin to the country where they are relocated now. Most of their stories were not concentrated on their homeland, concerning conflicts and war related experiences. However, follow up questions drove them to gain momentum and to express their stories on conflicts and war situation.

Considering this variance within this two groups, some individual were also identified concerning the structure of the respondent's narrative and

accordingly five narratives emerged through told stories: avert narratives, Struggling narratives, Instantaneous narratives, Boundary narratives, and re-occurrence narratives.These narratives have been emerged by using Grounded theory as it provides flexible guidelines to explore and analyze data (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014).

Avert Narratives: *'I am from Syria and then I moved to live in Turkey'*

Syrian narratives had small accounts of their home land and war related experiences. Syrian narratives were reluctant to elaborate their conflict related experiences, it can be the reason that they want to avoid these stories, which can affect their mental well-being. Sayeed, a 32 years Syrian, left his country when he was 29, he described his story of his life in his home country shortly:

Extract 1

1. I was living in Syria with my family and friends
2. Conflict begun in Syria
3. Then I was forced to go abroad
4. It was not for holidays, only to find myself in a refugee camp

This respondent described his life in his country of origin in few sentences (1.1, 1.2), hence the narratives of his home country and war related story has not been well formulated. Family and friends however has been a hint (1.1), which can be extracted in regard to life at home. War related story plot can be elaborated in relation to the consequences of forced migration (1.4) and it was not for any amusement or holidays, but no elaboration of the experiences is formed. On the other hand, when explained the life in Estonia, many descriptions are offered as from Extract 2.

Extract 2

1. Initial period was difficult for many reasons...
2. I do not know local language.
3. I have no friends and relatives...
4. I cannot share anything with anybody, no help from anybody.

5. No one talks here, so cold and dark...
6. I do not see any people on the street, culture is different.
7. It is completely a different country.

Respondent in this extract shared his difficulties and described it clearly (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6) in contrast to the first Extract. Language problem and not having family members and friends (2.1 and 2.3) to share his struggle can be understood. Climate differences and cultural barrier is mentioned clearly (2.5 and 2.6) and while it was shared, way of expressing the stress was clearly evident. His experiences in Estonian was clearly described and later his thoughts about future in Estonia was also well described in contrast to the narratives in Homeland.

Sayeed, time to time went back to share his thoughts on how his life was back home in regard to life before war and how nice it was to compare life that he is leading abroad but then his comments on life back home was very brief with almost no detail description to evaluate his thoughts and was not offered to narrativize his life during the and after the war.

Other respondents from Syria were likewise reluctant to share their narratives of war. They shortly described where they are from and then proceeded their life in exile as Rafal a 27-year man described *'I was 24 when I left Syria and then from there, I moved to Turkey to Europe.'* Even while asked to describe their story at home, the account was brief as follow:

Extract 3

1. Can you remember your stories in the war period and the journey that you had till Estonia?
2. Yes, I can remember very well.
3. Could you share your stories?
4. I had to spend money to leave and to reach Europe and the brokers took all before I reached to Europe and when I was sent to Estonia, I had nothing that I took from home.
5. I am still lucky I made it here. It was a horrible journey.

Rafal came to Estonia, and he had to spend more than three thousand euro to cross the sea to reach Europe in the first place. Here it is again

evident that no description was provided in regard to life in Syria and war narratives. Journey towards Estonia is described (3.4) as he mentioned it was 'horrible' but any description of horrible experiences is mentioned other than 'they took away all.' However, most of the Syrian refugees described their challenges of their initial period being exile and their hopes for the future, it can be extracted from this Extract (3.5) as he mentioned 'I am lucky I am alive and made it here', which shows her desire to life and to focus on her future life.

Tussle Narratives: *'Everything was gone in a moment...people died, screamed around'*

Since the Syrian Narratives of their life back home was almost non-existent, some follow up questions were utilized to elaborate their description but at the same time participant's willingness to express their own narrative was respected. In doing that so, nonverbal expressions have been taken into account. It is also understood that sometimes refugees try to avoid their distressing experiences and often think of their pleasant life before the conflict or before war begun as their coping device to go forward. Some studies have focused on how refugees made their effort to forget their previous memories and to concentrate on their current situation and to keep up their hope for the future. Children future, education and safety and successful life made them optimistic to adapt elder generation into a new societal context and at the same time think of their homeland before war (Hoot, 2011; Roxas, 2011; Este & Tachble, 2009). This particular aspect is also supported by the interviews with the Sudanese. However, Syrian narratives differ from this pattern, as illustrated below:

Extract 4

1. Can you tell me your life in Syria?
2. Sure...
3. Life was so good but then the war.....people screaming, dying, and things that I never saw before...
4. What about your life before conflict broke?

5. I had my parents, they had good job.... I had my brothers, they were studying...
6. They all died, only I survived...
7. I went to the refugee camp in Turkey all alone and it was difficult....

Rafal's war related narratives are not yet developed from this extract, possibly it was because he became too emotional to express. He informed his family member's death (4.6) but did not elaborate how it all happened. He described the event, but he did not explain the circumstances behind and surrounding that. His emotion of losing all family members and how he spent time afterwards and what are the 'difficulties' was not elaborated. At the same time, it is to state that the nonverbal expression conveyed his emotion. Rafal's narratives slowly got into exile as he mentioned 'only I survived' (4.6) despite the fact that in the Extract 3 he mentioned *'I am lucky that I made it'* but his narrative in this extract elaborated his difficulties in the camp and the journey being all alone. There is significant difference of narrative structure-willingness to narrate Syrian narratives are not well-formed, whereas narratives of exile are well-formed.

Instantaneous Narrative: *'It is a never-ending story'*

Zara's narrative a 21-year Syrian girl can be considered as an exception. She also started her story quickly going through life in Syria in saying one or two sentences, ending her remark *'what else!'* When prompted by the interviewer to describe her childhood by utilizing the same technique as Rafal's case, she changed her mood into a nostalgic account of how she spent her childhood with family and friends, which then moved to her feelings and thoughts to make it a well-developed narrative:

Extract 5

1. I left Syria 4 years before when it was impossible to live ...
2. What else!
3. What about your childhood in Syria?
4. Life was peaceful and good.
5. Anything else that you can remember?

6. We were living like a free bird
7. I had my family, friends, relatives
8. I could visit to my neighbours family
9. Many events around to have fun with others
10. I grew up in a friendly environment.
11. Everything was great.

The progression is somewhat similar to Rafal's narrative which drove to the war and conflict situation in the next extract on conflict life chaos and tough experiences.

Extract 6

1. Then the conflict started
2. Then war broke out...
3. Trying to look for shelter
4. You don't know where you are heading
5. Can you remember?
6. Yes, I can.... sometimes it just comes and go...all the scenes ...
7. When I close my eyes off.... it's like watching a video
8. People running around....
9. Screaming, and I could have been killed
10. It is a never-ending story.....

Zara's account of Syrian war is short, when prompted by the interviewers to elaborate she switched to a mode to express how it how she feels on her stress experiences by saying *'Yes, I can, sometimes it just comes and go.'*(6, 6) She finally attempted to describe war related narrative by expressing (6.8, 6.9), it was however not a fluent elaboration. When she was asked- 'can you remember', she said- Yes, I can, then she described how she feels (6.7) instead of describing what she recalled. Finally, her war related story moved to a point of fear narrative (6.9) and then she quickly returned to the present narrative as she mentioned, *it is a never-ending story* (6.10), instead of elaborating her never ending narrative, she moved to narrate her present situation.

Boundary Narrative: *'I do not want to share details about it now'*

Despite the fact that the participants from Sudan expressed their war related traumatic events very organized way in detailing what they witnessed, yet they expressed a point of disclosure to get into detail, so they do not feel distressed. Awchake a 35- year man expressed his narrative

Extract 7

1. I am Awchake.... my stories during the conflict period that lived my life....
2. I don't know whether it was war or conflict, but it was horrible. I may not be able to provide all information ...
3. However, I will try to recall the basics with sequence
4. But I do not want to provide details as I will feel stress out later then.

Awchake has expressed his stories in the war period with an afford to make it descriptive narrative by explaining his experiences of traumatic events, how he was tortured, female members being raped, fear of abduction, he even expressed that he witnessed killings, homes being burned, how chaos broke out, people looting even from neighbour's home. In order to validate his account, he even revealed some of the marks of him being tortured. It is a detailed war related narrative of which he tried to orient his audience. He ended up his Sudanese narrative by stating how he escaped and fled to the neighbour country and for that he is thankful to his God. Awchake's homeland narratives can be intertwined by his religious beliefs as he stated God help many times. His statement of not to get into details (7.5) can be elaborated with the fact of protecting himself and to avoid potential invasive questions or interruptions which actually in turn prompted to form his own narratives.

Re-occurrence/coming-going back Narratives*: I keep on thinking people are being killed, houses are burnt.*

Sudanese narratives on their trauma experiences expressed repeatedly, sometimes because of the question that the interviewer asked and sometimes it came spontaneously to describe their homeland narratives. Reagan who was 29, when he left Sudan described how he lost his home, when rebellion came and destroyed his house and killed his parents, he survived and ran away without knowing where he was heading and the fortune of his other family members. He fled to a refugee camp and finally reached to Estonia. While explaining his post migration narrative, he went back to describe his stories of how he escaped Sudan:

Extract 8

1. I have no one here.
2. I don't even know what happen to my other family members
3. I keep on thinking people are being killed, houses are burnt...
4. Dead bodies around....and you walk through them...
5. These memories will never die out from my mind...

Reagan started with his account of his present life and his feeling of being alone (8.1) and to have some of his loved ones around, when he doesn't know what happened to them (8.2). Then he proceeded to return to his homeland narratives by describing his account of traumatic event (8.3, 8.4), even though it is not totally well-formed narrative but the illustration of his traumatic experiences are expressed through *'you walk through them.*' As one of the aims of this study was to explore the coping mechanism, hence Reagan was asked how he went past these experiences, Reagan described about his mental state of affairs in relation to his experiences with the consultant.

Extract 9

1. I don't really think counselling works...
2. Some questions, I do not want to answer

3. Sometimes I found it strange when she asked questions which I do not want to deal with
4. They keep me back to the home memories...
5. You do not want to keep saying how you could have been slaughtered
6. So, I did not continue...

His account of counselling was on a negative note (9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5, 9.6) while asked about counselling and how it helped in coping, he again returned to his conflict related narrative. This extract also provides the fact that lack of proper psychological counselling which is needed to apply for particular group of people.

At the end of this long interview, when asked about his religious belief and how it helped in coping during his exile period, Reagan progressed very organized way and his description came spontaneously. He described how it makes a sense of his life to go forward throughout his journey from war to exile:

Extract 10

1. We pray, because that gives us some kind of hope.
2. When houses are burnt, people are being killed, you still pray
3. You don't know whether you will make it...
4. I am a Christian, so I know God has a purpose to send me...
5. There should be a meaning of life...
6. So, I am not going to give up. I will keep on running...

Sudanese account of religious belief helped them to look forward, many times their description took them to return repeatedly of their homeland narratives (10.2). In the end of the long interview with the participants from Sudan, many of them expressed that they never shared their stories with anybody, and their stories have never been told. Regan for instance said- he never had the chance to share his stories related to trauma with his own community people, as they all have their own stories, so he never wanted to give them something extra, which can again affect them to recall their tough memories.

Elori a 23 years Sudanese girl for instance expressed her detailed narrative on how she fled her country, her school days back home, and friends, her studies in Estonia and future thoughts. She elaborated the event when she lost her only brother while in exile. Elori's narrative ended with following:

Extract 11

1. My brother was the only member from my family who I can share things...
2. I had nothing to do, just to observe my brother passed away...
3. There was no funeral, we just buried him...
4. Then I realized, I have lost...
5. I think this is the first time I am talking about my brother...

Interview with Elori conveyed how she felt when she lost her brother and the shock *'I have lost.*' (11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4) Her fragmented sentences indicates the emotion narrative. She one point mentioned 'sorry for being emotional' indicates that she did not want to express her emotion but as she mentioned *'I think this is the first time I am talking about my brother'* indicates she was overwhelmed by the event and her account of loneliness can be observed.

Discussion

Interviews with the respondents produced five narratives of Avert narratives, struggling narratives, Instantaneous narratives, Boundary narratives, and Re-occurrence narratives. Participants were more fluent in elaborating their narratives of exile, life in Estonia than expressing their homeland and war narratives. Syrian participants were more reluctant in expressing their stories on war and conflict, whereas Sudanese narratives were more descriptive and elaborative.

Avert narratives were dominated by the accounts of Syrian participants who were silent in expressing their war related experiences. However, participants from both Sudan and Syria struggled to share their elaborate experiences of conflict related stories, which is however somewhat related to

the fact that it can impact negatively of their trauma narratives (Bneezer, 2002). Syrian narratives appeared more segmented than Sudanese narratives as it appeared that Syrian quickly mentioned their homeland narratives in one or two sentences and then moved to the next narratives on life in Estonia. Sudanese narratives appeared more organized and elaborated starting from homeland to exile but at the same time it appeared boundary line narratives in elaborating trauma related experiences. War related narratives still appeared less described but was more elaborated when prompted by the interviewer.

Religious and spiritual aspects appeared a measure of adaptation while in exile or difficult situation. Sudanese narratives appeared very strong in spiritual aspects as one respondent mentioned *'I am a Christian, so I know God has a purpose to send me',* which can also be supported by the other studies. Religion is quite close to cultural aspect, thus create a guide of feelings, thoughts and somewhat associated with identity. It might sound as an individual coping strategy when it comes to religious beliefs but can be associated with societal and cultural aspects (Park & Aii, 2006). Participating religious activities can be associated with good mental health but on the other hand those faced persecution based on religion, in many instances it is not as good as for other groups. Sudanese refugees in Germany for instance prayed intensively for their country's situations to improve (Schweitzer et al., 2007). Khawaja and his colleagues did research on South Asian refugees in Australia, and he figured that during the transit, refugees always pray to get things better and to have changed their current situation and this way they found moments of peace. Many studies focused on refugees' life and their experience through religion and beliefs. Tibetan refugees in India make their presence by focusing both past and present life through religious practice and beliefs through Dalai Lama and Buddhism (Hussain & Bhusan, 2013). Some Sudanese refugees for instance in Norway took their extreme traumatic situation as God will make them to heal that in future things will get better (Goodman, 2004).

Returning narratives appeared from both group of participants, and they keep focusing on family and friends. Loneliness and being all alone also somewhat preventing in coping with ne new environment while in exile. Aspects of community and family have been focused from the previous

studies as part of coping mechanism as well. Children with their parents and other family members have sound mental health than those who arrived alone, stated by Fazel and his colleagues (2012), this study also stated that in the family environment those who discussed the conflict and war situations on their home countries have the chances to have children with mental issues than those who avoided discussing these previous incidences.

Support from social services, a family with extended members and community can function as to perform better and to resettle refugees into a new country context (Lim, 2009; East et al., 2010). Family reunion can be a matter of coping strategies, and they give the support both in mental and materiel context. In a study of refugees in Australia, Wilmsen (2013) presented many aspects that are negatively correlated while a refugee or a group of refugees are separated from their family members.

Family ties are also important as many studies also highlighted its importance. Intergenerational ties for instance has been described by Lewis (2010) in his study on Cambodian refugees to focus on how they became resilient to getting over societal and cultural gaps between the society that they are currently based in and their home country context.

Not having the chance to share experiences was mentioned by the participants. Sharing experiences, emotion among the family members have been highlighted by a study on refugees in Canada (Simich et al., 2014). Tamil refugees for instance in Norway were proactive in reducing future stress and to manage any strange situations by taking collective action (Guribye et al., 2011) Research on how refugees face their traumatic situation also highlighted on family ties and collective action. For instance, a study on Tamil refugees in Norway, Guribye et al. (2011) also described that refugees tried to absorb and heal any news in relation to deteriorating situation and more conflict in their country of origin. In a study of refugee women in Sweden, Boerema and her colleagues (2010) stated that weeding participation, wearing traditional dresses and enjoying parties in traditional ways and music also helps in settling a new society.

Conclusion

In order to understand refugee families and how they adapt in a new society, memory and narratives play vital role in constructing 'their self' as Halbwachs (1980) in his study on refugees and their adaptation came up with the statement that it is important to focus on the participants memory and its significance to construct their narratives. Memories can be viewed as individual aspect; however, it has the importance of the social aspect as well (Teski & Climbo, 1995). It is expected that refugees should cope with their host societies values and norm, in this process memories of past somewhat relegate and their present memories become more dominant (Bneezer, 2002). This study explored to address those memories and stories that have not been heard or listened, in order to come up with new narratives. Participants were really happy of sharing their experiences as it appeared the first time whom they could share their struggle during the war period and in exile. However, one significant outcome of this study is the lack of compatibility of the stories between two groups, through which five narratives established to elaborate the variety of their accounts. Concerning the coping mechanism and identity construction, different ways are identified from their narratives. From a collective point of view these narratives will enhance our understating of the refugee communities in Estonia and their ways of solving problem and coping mechanism.

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